

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

BY A PROTESTANT THEOLOGIAN. CCXII.

I have come accidentally upon a very curious little book, which deserves some remark. It is entitled: "Life among the Germans." The author is a Western lady. It is published by D. Lothrop Company, and bears date 1887.

The editor, V. L. Conrad, describes the authoress as "an American Christian woman." We did not suppose she was a Jewess, but in this book her Christianity appears chiefly in an intense hatred of Rome, and in a marvellous credulity as to the excellences of Luther (his greatness we all know) and as to the unspicable benefits of the Reformation. I have evidently never read Melancthon's opinion of Luther's relations to the runaway nuns, which, to be sure, he hoped would improve after he had settled one of them in his home. As to the Reformation, she is wholly unaware how profoundly her opinion differs from Luther's own. He declares that his preaching ruined the morality of Germany, and it is a serious question whether this has ever recovered itself.

President Hadley of Yale remarks that the violent political passions roused by the Reformers were the death of liberty on the continent for a number of generations. I am afraid that in Germany liberty has not recovered yet. Men can teach what they like, it is true, but from Catholicity to atheism, and man's property and right of residence are secure. Yet when a maidervant can be thrown into prison for criticizing a photograph of the Emperor, and a landlady for remarking that the Emperor has grown stout, we do not commonly call that a land of liberty. The author and the Reformation and the Gaiety of this lady are a deadly enemy.

However, it must be owned that matters have not gone as far in Germany as Luther and Melancthon desired to bring them. They urged that the common people should be reduced to slavery; but even the tyrannical lords and princes did not venture to go so far as that, although it is true that long afterwards the Catholic Protestant King of England, who was practically a German, acted conjointly on the principle that a German prince had a right to sell his male subjects to be food for powder.

I may remark that I owe my knowledge of the Landgrave Frederick's change of religion to Dr. Lasher of the Cincinnati Journal and Messenger. I had never imagined that a single successor of the Bigamist had recurred to the old religion. This, for a wonder, is a point on which John T. Christian has neither blundered nor lied.

However, our author's little book has nothing peculiar as to these matters. What is unique in it is the intensely comical way in which she illustrates "the hidden wisdom of Rome" by her extraordinary exposition of the history of Saxony. It goes far ahead of a Becket's burlesque History of England.

First, she tells us that Saxony is a Catholic kingdom in Protestant Germany, that is, as she explains, in the Protestant part of Germany. This sounds strange enough, inasmuch as only one-third of the population are Catholics. The absurdity of the statements seems to strike the author herself, for she then remarks that Saxony is nominally Catholic but really Protestant.

How is it nominally Catholic? The Lutheran clergy are established throughout the land, and paid by the State; the Lutheran prelates are only invested in authority; there are 2,000 Lutheran government schools, and only 40 Catholic; for the Protestant members of the court there is a special Lutheran Superintendent. There is not a Catholic diocese in the kingdom, only a vicar apostolic. Of the 48 members of the Upper House, four are ecclesiastics, at least three of them Lutherans. This one university, Leipzig, is thoroughly Lutheran, and is represented in the Upper House.

Moreover, Protestantism is acknowledged as the established religion by a peculiar provision. A Catholic may become Lutheran at will, but no Lutheran may become Catholic until after an examination before a court, and a certificate granted that he is acting without constraint. Furthermore, the King makes Saxony a Catholic kingdom, but the succession of the Catholic heir of its constitutionally established character of a Protestant kingdom, or than the fact that the reigning house of Baden is Protestant makes Baden a Protestant grandduchy. Nay, should the line of Helenzollern-Sigmaringen ever become Kings of Prussia and German Emperors, Prussia will still be a Protestant empire, and Germany, unless it annexes Austria, will remain a Protestant empire.

The author seems to glance unconsciously towards the position, that no country can be regarded as properly Protestant, so long as it is allowed to obey a Catholic chief magistrate. True, that principle has thus far been practically applied to our line of Presidents, but it is not recognized by law, nor, I am sure, would our author wish to have it so. In Germany no such principle has ever been known, in law or practice.

Her Saxony history, however, is much drollier than her Saxony law. She tells us that before Augustus the Strong (whom she calls Augustus I., being in fact Augustus II.) many and many an Elector had tried to force Catholicism upon Saxony, but in vain. Now as every Elector, from Frederick II., had

been a Lutheran, what possible motive could this inexplicable succession of men have had for forcing on their people a religion which they had renounced for themselves? Saxony, says Dr. David Muller, from the Elector Maurice on, was not only Protestant, but for a long while the head of Northern German Protestantism.

At last Augustus II., a fearfully sensual and utterly unprincipled man, seeing a prospect of obtaining the crown of Poland, pretended conversion to Catholicism, and realized his wish. It would be an insult to the Catholic religion to treat him as a genuine convert. He became King Augustus I. of Poland, retaining the Elector Augustus II. of Saxony.

Of this vital change of relations the author seems not to have the faintest consciousness. Indeed, she appeals for her history to her landlady, who is probably not a university professor. However, hearing talk of King Augustus I., she quietly converts Saxony itself into a kingdom one hundred and nine years before it ceased to be a simple Electorate. By the way, our anti-Popish friends seem to have a remarkable freedom in dealing with chronology. A century or two more or less, one way or the other, matters nothing to them. I was once told by a young lady in a girl's school that the Thirty Years' War was owing to the appropriation of Church property by the Protestants in the time of the Crusades. Our author is a teacher in a girls' school, and perhaps it is there she has learned her free and easy way of dealing with dates and events.

When Augustus II. became a Catholic, we learn from the author, or rather from her accomplished landlady, an arrangement was made that Saxony was to become Protestant again as soon as an heir should be born to the crown. How it could become Lutheran again, when it had been Lutheran before, was when Luther then, and has been Lutheran ever since, the two learned ladies do not explain. If they mean anything at all (which is very doubtful) they can only mean that while Augustus II. was to remain a Catholic, his heir, who became Augustus III., should be brought up a Lutheran. At all events, this was what was done. However, on growing up, he found that he could not follow his father as King of Poland and become a Catholic likewise.

Perhaps she, or rather her lodging house keeper, will say that Augustus the Third's Lutheran education did not fill the contract, as he was born before his father's change of religion. The arrangement, if any had ever been made, has now lasted for two hundred and six years. During all this time, the author assures us, owing to "the hidden wisdom of Rome," no heir has ever been born in the reigning family. Every reigning pair have been childless. The crown, in every case, has descended to a nephew.

Let us see the facts. Augustus II. was succeeded by his son Augustus III., he by his son Frederick Christian, he by his son Frederick Augustus I., he by his nephew Frederick Augustus II., he by his brother John, and he by his son Albert. King Albert has been succeeded by his brother George. King George has three sons and two daughters. His eldest son, the Crown Prince Frederick Augustus, has likewise three sons and two daughters.

We see then, since 1697 brothers have twice succeeded brothers, and four times sons have succeeded fathers, and a fifth son is on the point of succeeding his father, having himself three sons to succeed him. And yet this Western government comes back and retails the meaningless gabble of a Dresden housekeeper, as if we had no encyclopedias or *Almanachs de Gotha*!

CHARLES C. STARBUCK.
Andover, Mass.

IMITATION OF CHRIST.

A PRAYER AGAINST EVIL THOUGHTS.

O Lord my God, depart not far from me. O my God, have regard to help me, for divers evil thoughts and great fears, afflicting my soul, have risen up against me.

How shall I pass without hurt? How shall I break through them? I will go before thee and will humble the great ones of the earth. (Isaiah, xiv. 2.)

I will open the gates of the prison and will reveal to thee hidden secrets. Do, O Lord, as thou sayest, and let all these wicked thoughts flee from before Thy face.

This is my hope and my only comfort, to fly to Thee in all tribulations, to confide in Thee, to call on Thee from my heart, and patiently to look for Thy consolation.

ANOTHER LIE NAILED.

SILLY STORY FROM MEXICO SHOWN TO BE AN INVENTION.

Editor Union and Times: Dear Sir—A few weeks ago the following news from Mexico went through the daily press:

City of Mexico, March 2—News-papers here publish the following remarkable story, which is said to be authenticated by the Church authorities in the town of Bagos in the State of Balisco:

During a visit of pilgrims who arrived from Leon Guanajate at one of the churches a woman, under the influence of liquor, attempted to enter a shrine. She was stopped at the door by one of the pilgrims and she began to swear so horribly that a bolt came from the sky and she was converted into a rock statue. The reports add that the statue was then removed to the house of the parish priest and that the latter is exacting a fee of fifty cents from everybody who wants to see it. Many residents of Bagos claim to have seen the statue and recognized the woman who was so severely punished.

In order to find out what was true of this shocking occurrence I immediately addressed a letter to a friend (Rev. Father P. Spina, S. J., of Saltillo, Mex.) asking him to inquire into the matter and to inform me as to the cor-

rectness of the statement made in the clipping which I had sent him and from which the above notice is copied.

A few days ago I received the following answer: The city of "Bagos" does not exist, but Lagos; the same of the province, not of "Balisco" but of "Talasco." There is here at the college a father who was born at Lagos, and who declares that nothing at all has happened of what the newspaper reports, and that this latest invention is to be added to the list of current fables.

We deem it unnecessary, therefore, to trouble the parish priest of that place, since both the testimony of Father Gonzalez and the very absurdity of the story give sufficient proof of its falsity.

FRED. J. HILLIG, S. J.

FIVE-MINUTE SERMON.

Sunday Within the Octave of the Ascension.

THE ASCENSION.

"And the Lord Jesus after He had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven." (St. Mark 16:19)

In looking back over the life of our Lord while on earth, we see that all the mysteries refer to the Ascension as to the end and completion of His work. As every mystery of His life began with the Incarnation of our Lord, so they all end with His Ascension into heaven. After that the work of our Holy Ghost begins. And His glorious ending upon Him and when He was condemned to death, His humility and love when He cried out on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," all are finished by the mystery of His Ascension, than which nothing can be more noble, than which nothing is more sacred to occupy the throne of heaven. He ascended to occupy the throne, to possess the kingdom He had purchased by His passion and death, and in order to show us that the kingdom He spoke of was not of this world, for the wealth and power of this earth is but perishable, while the riches our Lord spoke of are above the natural and are eternal.

Our Lord's Ascension leads us to think of Him and to follow Him in mind and heart. His rising from the dead and ascending into heaven He gave us a model to follow no less than by His suffering and death. By His Ascension our Lord would show us that although we are in this world we should not be of the world, that our minds and thoughts should be directed toward heaven. By the Ascension of our Lord the gates of heaven were opened and a place against us, to possess the kingdom of heaven, and to ascend into heaven He gave us a model to follow no less than by His suffering and death. By His Ascension our Lord would show us that although we are in this world we should not be of the world, that our minds and thoughts should be directed toward heaven. By the Ascension of our Lord the gates of heaven were opened and a place against us, to possess the kingdom of heaven, and to ascend into heaven He gave us a model to follow no less than by His suffering and death. 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