

DON BOSCO AND THE DEVIL

WHY THE ENEMIES OF RELIGION IN ITALY WOULD DESTROY THE SALESIAN WORK OF A SAINTLY PRIEST.

In the anti-clerical campaign fomented in Italy by Freemasonry, both native and foreign, kept alive by the hired press of Rome and elsewhere, carried on by all the lowest elements, and benevolently winked at by the Government, the organized enemies of Christianity focused their attacks upon the Salesians and their great institutions for the training of youth. The fact is significant and it suggests a story. The Salesians, or, under their formal title, the Society of St. Francis de Sales, were founded by the venerable Don Bosco, whose cause of beatification and canonization was introduced at Rome in the closing days of last month. The story of Don Bosco reads like a romance. As told by Rome, the admirable weekly published in English in the Eternal City, it shows that Italy's "reign of terror" is a veritable war between the devil and the founder of the Salesians, who has so recently been declared Venerable. Says Rome:

"There were three of them in a cab, and the one in the middle was a priest. The other two tried to beguile him with nonsense, and they were taking him to a lunatic asylum of Turin. For their poor friend in the cab was insane—quite insane, although not dangerously so. Indeed, he looked really calm, and a shrewd observer might even have detected a humorous twinkle in his eye, while his two friends, on the other hand, were obviously disturbed. Then a strange thing happened. The priest gave a significant look to the keepers and the next minute his two companions were vainly endeavoring to explain to them that it was not they that were mad, but Don Bosco. Don Bosco in the meanwhile was making way peacefully homewards with an amused smile on his face.

"That was over half a century ago, and a great many years among the good people of Turin, besides the two men in the cab, had come to the conclusion that Don Giovanni had lost his senses. He was born in the village of Muraldo near Turin, on the Feast of the Assumption, in 1815, and a few years later when the parish priest asked him why he worked so hard over his books, he little chaps answered: 'Because I want to be able some day to teach my companions who are growing up badly because there is nobody else to do it for them.' He began early, for when he was a mere boy he gathered a number of urchins around him and formed them into a club, all the members of which pledged themselves not to use bad words, or to curse or blaspheme, and to be always good and obedient. Soon after he was ordained priest, he was afflicted to see so many boys among the criminals, and he began to devise plans to remedy the evil. But, like most of the great works undertaken by saints, his was to have a very humble beginning.

A HUMBLE BEGINNING.

"One morning in the Church of San Francesco he heard a young scariot berate a boy severely for refusing to serve Mass. The young priest soon got into conversation with the companion asked him to come with him to the church on the following Sunday. On the way home he found another boy idling in the streets, and this one also was invited. They came on the appointed day, bringing with them a number of their companions, and Don Bosco thus held his first oratory meeting. Soon there were a hundred of them, and Don Bosco's trials began. The boys were not very much noisier crowd, and they got very much on the nerves of the neighbors where they used to gather, with the result that Don Giovanni was constantly receiving notice to quit after he had been for a short time in any one place. It was then, too, that many of the same and respectable citizens of Turin began to whisper that the young priest was mad. Others shook their heads and said that it was something worse. Don Bosco meant mischief by organizing the lowest elements of society. And to crown all, there were some local theologians who found his theories heretical, and predicted that his speedy excommunication was inevitable. Even some of the parish priests eyed him askance—the boys, however, could not attend the parochial Sunday school, and that was upsetting the established order of things.

"Then the civil authorities got excited about Don Bosco and the hundreds (they had grown to hundreds by this time) of boys that followed him. The prefect called him one day and told him that the thing must stop. The prefect pointed out to him the very text of the law which forbade public assemblies: the prefect told him that his 'meetings' constituted a danger to the public peace, and at the end of the interview the prefect threatened to arrest him the next time he was found leading his ragged regiment. Some time before this the priest, finding it impossible to get a hall for love or money for their meetings, had hired a field for their meetings, but when he reached his room that day after his unpleasant conversation with the prefect he found a few lines from the owner of the field informing him that he could not have it any longer. He had made some friends, but when they heard of the latest developments of the situation they told him that he had better drop the business. Then it was that Don Bosco showed what were clearly unmistakable signs of megalomania. He began to talk about building a great oratory—there were to be large halls on this side and open courts on that, and here the portico and there the church, and—and, in short, there could be no longer any doubt that the only place suited for Don Bosco's complaint was the lunatic asylum.

THE TURNING POINT.

"After Don Giovanni had left his two friends to explain things as best

they could to the skeptical keepers, he fixed on a site for his new oratory. It was at first a kind of a cellar, very different from the gorgeous description he had given his friends; but he buckled down to work at it with a number of helpers, and in a week had transformed it into a chapel, which he dedicated to St. Francis de Sales. It was the turning point in his history. The priests began to aid him; the ecclesiastical authorities endorsed him; the terrible prefect came to the conclusion that he was not a revolutionary of a dangerous type; King Carlo Alberto himself took the oratory under his protection and the urchins swarmed like bees about Don Bosco's first permanent hive of piety and instruction. He was doing so much good that the king urged him to open others of the same kind throughout Piedmont, especially in the poorer quarters of the large towns.

"But this was only the first stage in his career. One night he came upon a number of boys unusually ragged, and quite unnumbered with boots or stockings. He had a little talk with them, and he found that they were not at home because they had no home, and that they proposed to spend that night like every other night—under the stars. Don Bosco invited them to be his guests for the night, and they very cheerfully consented. Doubtless the police had caught them about early rising, for when their host went the following morning to ask them how they had slept, he discovered that they had already taken French leave—and he was left with a very uncomfortable feeling. It was not a very encouraging beginning, but the host was more fortunate than he looked. One autumn evening a youth knocked at his door—hungry, homeless, drenched to the skin, absolutely penniless. Don Bosco took him in, and he never afterwards lodged anywhere else. A few days later an orphan boy was added to the little family; then it grew to ten, twenty, a hundred, four hundred, eight hundred, and the little house had grown into an immense hospice—the first of the Salesian houses. At that time Don Bosco used to send the boys out to learn trades; later he opened workshops for them in the hospice, in order that they might be removed as far as possible from the evil influence of bad companions.

"A MINISTER'S SUGGESTION. 'Nobody now thought of shutting up Don Bosco in an asylum. He had friends everywhere, even in the most unexpected quarters. One of them was Urbano Rattazzi, at that time Minister of the Interior of Italy. Rattazzi was one of the men responsible for the suppression of the religious orders in those days of savage anti-clericalism. It is not in the least likely that he would ever be canonized by the Church, yet he has a curious claim to be considered one of the founders of one of the most remarkable of modern religious congregations. One day in a conversation with the now famous priest he said: 'Don Bosco, I hope that you may live long for the sake of your boys, but even you are mortal, and what is to become of them when you are gone? Why not think of founding a society of ecclesiastics to continue your work for them?'

"Don Bosco expressed his astonishment at receiving such advice from such a quarter, but Rattazzi insisted: he grew warm on the subject; he began to trace out the main plan of the new society; he answered Don Bosco's objections; he convinced him, and the members of which are commonly known as Salesians, is the result. Later on it was completed by the founding of the Society of the Sisters of Maria Auxiliatrice, which does for girls what the other institute does for boys. Don Bosco, whom we may perhaps be permitted one day to venerate as St. John Bosco, and who may have his niche among the Holy Founders in St. Peter's if the Church in her infallible judgment so decides, died so recently (January 31, 1888) that many of us will remember having read the announcement of it in the papers; but he lived long enough to see his society become a wonderful international institution.

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY ESTABLISHMENTS.

"Besides numerous houses in Italy, of which we shall have to speak lower down, the Society of St. Francis de Sales has 150 establishments, with 800 religious scattered throughout South America—in the Argentine, Paraguay, Uruguay, Peru, Patagonia, Mexico. Until a few years ago it had thirty houses in France, nearly all of them unhappily wiped out by the persecutions there, and it possesses a score of institutions in the Orient—in the Levant, Egypt, Palestine, Asia Minor, Turkey. It has also a few in North Africa.

"But it is here in Italy itself that Don Bosco's work has been successful. The entire peninsula is dotted with Salesian institutes, and its colleges and schools for boys of the middle and poor classes are frequented by about 25,000 pupils.

"All the Salesian houses in the East have been from the beginning placed under the protection of the Italian flag. However the Italian Government may have persecuted the Church, the Salesians have always refrained from doing anything that might compromise their friendly relations with it; and it must be said that on the whole the ministrations that have succeeded one another since 1870 here in Rome have been well disposed to the society of Don Bosco—when they have not found it necessary to pander to the passions of anti-clericalism at times of crisis.

FREQUENTLY ATTACKED.

"It will be readily understood, therefore, that the Salesians have always been much on the nerves of those who are determined to make the Italian Government an avowed agent of the devil. Of late years the assaults on the devoted congregation have been growing in intensity and frequency, but by a curious coincidence, which is perhaps more than a coincidence, the fiercest attack of all has been reserved for the very moment when the Church decided to admit the cause of canonization of

the holy founder before the Congregation of Rites.

"The boy Besson, of whose infamous diary we treated last week, is now being examined by a commission of alienists, who will very probably find that he is insane. Even the Messagero now acknowledges in an obscure paragraph that his famous diary is a paragraph of credence. It has so happened, that just as the agitation about the Salesians of Varazze was beginning to die out a sentence of the tribunal acquitted the Salesians of charges made against another of their institutes at Pallanza a year ago. Before the Pallanza case there was another at Messina, where a Salesian college with three hundred pupils was closed by the Government to be reopened again after a few months, when it was found that the charges brought against the institute were quite devoid of foundation.

"We may look for other attacks in the near future, for it is quite clear that the war is on between the devil and Don Bosco. Meanwhile none of the honors of the fray are so far from the devil or his Messagero. Philadelphia Catholic Standard and Times.

A STANDING MIRACLE.

WHAT A PRIEST SAW AT THE TOMB OF ST. CATHERINE OF BOLOGNA.

A. Hilliard Atteridge, in the Ave Maria describes Bologna as "a city of marvels," and perhaps the greatest marvel amongst those of which he treats is the miraculously preserved body of one of the earlier painters of the Bolognese school—St. Catherine of Vigri, better known as St. Catherine of Bologna. She died on March 9, 1463. Her studio was a cell in the convent of the Poor Clares, adjoining the Church of the Blessed Sacrament—Corpus Domini—a Church which she herself founded in 1456. One of the best known guides to northern Italy notes that "the interior contains the tomb of the saint at the second altar," but gives no hint of the wonder that has been going on there for more than four centuries.

The best account of the shrine of St. Catherine that I have ever seen, writes Mr. Atteridge, is contained in one of the articles on the holy places of Italy which the late Father John Morris, S. J., contributed to the Month nearly twenty years ago. I make no apology, therefore, for repeating a few paragraphs. I had the privilege of knowing Father Morris well, and can safely say that he was a careful, accurate observer, who weighed his words, and was the last man in the world to be carried away by mere enthusiasm into loose exaggeration. He visited Bologna on his way back to London from Rome in 1880, arriving there on a Sunday morning.

"I went up to the first man I saw in the piazza," he writes, "and asked him kindly to tell me where I should find Santa Caterina di Bologna, 'La Santa!' he called out, indignant that in her own city she should require to be more fully named. I followed his directions, made my way into the church, and, mindful of the lesson I had received in the piazza, I asked in the sacristy whether I might say Mass at the altar of La Santa. The vestments were given me, and I followed the server into the church till he brought me to a transept altar. I did not know in the least what to expect, and thought that St. Catherine was reposing at full length beneath the altar, and that after Mass I should be allowed to see her. I was arranging my chalice for Mass when I noticed that above the altar card was a large oval opening or window, barred with gilt iron bars, and on the other side of it a light red silk curtain. As it caught my eye I heard the curtain rings run back, and there I stood face to face with St. Catherine.

"I have seldom been more startled, and it certainly was more so, than when, in the room beyond the transept, I saw the opposite to the altar and facing toward it, St. Catherine was sitting up in her chair—the only dead body I ever saw not lying at full length. It was a very moving thing to see one's Mass there, and whenever one raised one's eyes to see the calm figure of the saint sitting like a queen on her throne.

"After my Mass and thanksgiving I was, by special permission from the bishop, taken into the room where the saint is. The permission was necessary, because the room was part of an enclosed convent of Poor Clares, whose first abbess was St. Catherine. The nuns have access to the room, as they have full charge of their wonderful treasure. They constantly make new habits for St. Catherine, as the only relics that they can give away are portions of vestments that she has worn. The body of the saint is intact, so that no portion of her is to be found elsewhere—except, indeed, that there is, in a glass case not far from her, a vial of blood which years ago was drawn from her veins long after death. There sits the saint, and there she has sat for four hundred years, unchanged, except that her face, her hands and her feet are almost black. On her lip is a white mark which is thought to show the place where in a vision one Christmas night the Infant Jesus kissed her.

"The saint is said to be sitting up in her chair without support, not leaning back. If so, it is very wonderful for her habit is perfectly flexible. To that I can testify; for they said to me, 'You are a priest; take her hand in yours.' I did so, and raised it reverently to my lips. My memory of the flexibility of that sacred hand is confirmed by a friend. She tells me that the ring she wears was placed on the finger of the saint. This flexibility without corruption is very wonderful for, as every doctor knows, it is the commencement of putrefaction that naturally relaxes the rigor mortis. Now, St. Catherine died on March 9, 1463.

In the room Father Morris was shown some things that had belonged to her—her breviary and paintings by her hand, of Our Blessed Lord and His holy mother. A recent biographer of St. Catherine, the Protestant author of a book on some of the women artists of

Italy, suggests that the marvel is due to embalming. But embalming was not practiced in medieval Italy. If it had been we should now have the unchanged bodies of princes and rulers of the old cities, of nobles and men of famous artists. This attempt to explain away the preservation of the body of St. Catherine only shows how marvelous is this standing miracle enduring through the burning heat of hundreds of Italian summers.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

We publish herewith the appeal of the Archbishops and bishops of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in behalf of Christian education. That subject has been grating in importance during the past few years and it elicits the attention of all thoughtful men at the present time. More than twenty years ago the Bishops of non-Catholic countries are saying today—that Christian education is of paramount importance in this country. Catholics cannot afford to be indifferent to it and we call attention to the subject at this time, in order that they may give it due consideration before the beginning of the school year.

"Scarcely, if at all, secondary to the Church's desire for the education of the clergy is her solicitude for the education of the laity. It is not for themselves but for the people, that the Church wishes her clergy to be learned, as it is not for themselves only, but for the people that they are priests. Popular education has always been a chief object of the Church's care; in fact, it is not too much to say that the history of civilization and education in the rude ages, when semi-barbarian chieftains boasted of their illiteracy, she succeeded in diffusing that love of learning which covered Europe with schools and universities, and thus from the barbarous tribes of the early middle ages, she built up the civilized nations of modern times. Even subsequent to the religious dissensions of the sixteenth century, whatever progress has been made in education is mainly due to the impetus which she had previously given. In our own country, notwithstanding the many difficulties attendant on first beginnings and unexampled growth, we already find her schools, academies and colleges everywhere, built and sustained by voluntary contributions, even at the cost of great sacrifices, and comparing favorably with the best educational institutions in the land, for completeness of equipment and thoroughness of training.

These facts abundantly attest the Church's desire for popular instruction. The beauty of truth, the refining and elevating influences of knowledge are meant for all, and she wishes them to be brought within the reach of all. Knowledge enlarges our capacity both for self improvement and for promoting the welfare of our fellow-men; and in no noble a work as the Church wishes every heart to be quickened by the light of knowledge. It is only a "little learning" that is a "dangerous thing." In days like ours, when error is so potent and aggressive, everyone needs to be as completely armed as possible with sound knowledge—not only the clergy, but the people, that they may be able to withstand the noxious influences of popularized ignorance. In the great common combat between truth and error, Faith and Agnosticism, an important part of the fray must be born by the laity, and woe to them if they are not well prepared. And if, in the olden days of vassalage and serfdom, the Church honored every individual, no matter how humble his position, and labored to give him the enlightenment that would qualify him for higher responsibilities, much more now, in the era of popular rights and liberties, when every individual is an active and influential factor in the body politic, does she desire that all should be fitted by suitable training for an intelligent and conscientious discharge of the important duties that may devolve upon him.

Few, if any, will deny that a sound civilization must depend upon sound popular education. But education, in order to be sound, and to produce beneficial results, must develop what is best in man, and make him not only clever but good. A one-sided education will develop a one-sided people, and such a life will surely be a curse, and as well every social system that is built up of such lives. True civilization requires that not only the physical and intellectual, but also the moral and religious well-being of the people should be improved, and that at least with equal care. Take away religion from a people, and morality will soon follow; morality gone, even their physical condition will be long degenerate into the corruption which breeds disease and crime, while their intellectual attainments would only serve as a light to guide them to deeper depths of vice and ruin. This has been so often demonstrated in the history of the past, and is, in fact, so self-evident that one is amazed to find any difference of opinion about it. A civilization without religion would be a civilization without the struggle for existence, and the survival of the fittest, in which cunning and strength would become the substitutes for principle, virtue, conscience and duty. As a matter of fact there never has been a civilization worthy of the name without religion; and from the facts of history the laws of human nature can easily be inferred. Hence education, in order to foster civilization, must foster religion. Now the three great educational agencies are the home, the Church and the school. They would men and shape society. Therefore each of them, to do its part well, must foster religion. But many, unfortunately, while avowing that religion should be the light and atmosphere of the home and the Church, are content to see it excluded from the school system that which necessarily excludes religion. Few surely will deny that childhood and youth are the

periods of life when the character ought especially to be subjected to religious influences. Nor can we ignore the palpable fact that the school is an important factor in the forming of childhood and youth—so important that its influence when not harmonizing with the influence of home and Church, is often found to outweigh and neutralize them both. It cannot, therefore, be desirable or advantageous that religion should be excluded from the school. On the contrary, it ought to be there one of the chief agencies for molding the young life to all that is true and virtuous, and holy. To shut religion out of the school, and keep it for the home and the Church, is, logically, to train up a generation that will consider religion good for home and the Church, but not for the practical business of real life. But a more false and pernicious notion could not be imagined. Religion, in order to elevate the people, should inspire their whole life and rule their relations with one another. A life is not dwarfed, but ennobled by being lived in the presence of God. Therefore, the school which principally gives the knowledge of religion, ought to be fitted for practical life, ought to be pre-eminently under the holy influence of religion. From the shelter of the home and school, the youth must soon go out into the busy ways of trade or traffic or professional practice. In all those, the principles of religion should animate and direct him. But he cannot expect to learn these principles in the workshop, or office, or the counting room. Therefore, let him be thoroughly imbued with them by the joint influence of home and school before he is launched out into the dangerous sea of life.

All denominations of Christians are now awakening to this great truth which the Catholic Church has never ceased to maintain. Reason and experience are forcing them to recognize that the only practical way to secure a Christian people is to give the youth a Christian education. The avowed enemies of Christianity in some European countries are banishing religion from the schools, in order to eliminate it gradually from among the people. In this they are logical, and we may well profit by the lesson. Hence the cry for Christian education is going up from all religious bodies throughout the land. And this is no narrowness of view, but a logical and logical endeavor to preserve Christian truth and morality among the people by fostering religion in the young. Nor is it any antagonism to the State; on the contrary, it is an honest endeavor to give the State better citizens by making them better Christians. The friends of Christian education do not condemn the State for not imparting religious instruction in the public schools as they are now organized because they well know it does not lie within the province of the State to teach religion. They simply follow their conscience by sending their children to denominational schools, where religion can have its rightful place and influence.

Two objects, therefore, we have in view, viz: To multiply our schools, and to perfect them. We must multiply them till every Catholic child in the land shall have the means of education within its reach. There is still much to be done ere this is attained. There are still hundreds of Catholic children in the United States deprived of the benefit of a Catholic school. Pastor and parents should not rest till this defect be remedied. No parish is complete till it has schools adequate to the needs of its children and the pastor and people of such a parish should feel that they have not accomplished their entire duty until the want is supplied.

But then we must also perfect our schools. We repudiate the idea that the Catholic school need be in any respect inferior to any other school whatsoever. And if hitherto, in some places, our people have acted on the principle that it is better to have an imperfect Catholic school than to have none at all, let them now push their praiseworthy ambition still further and not relax their efforts till their school be elevated to the highest educational excellence. And we implore parents not to hasten to take their children from school, but to give them all the time and advantages that they have the capacity to its profit by, so that in after life their children may "rise up and call them blessed."—True Voice.

The Name They Go By.

A boy who was selling mine pies at a railway station was kept shouting: "Hot mine pies!" "Hot mine pies!" "A man bought one and found it quite cold." "Say, boy," he protested, "why do you call these mine pies hot?" "Because that is the name they go by, sir," said the boy.

There are Christians and Catholics whose religion is cold, whose piety is dead; but they are still called "Catholics." "It is the name they go by," they give no evidence of the faith that is in them. They hear Christian principles denied and controverted in conversation, and they utter no objection. They do not declare their convictions. We so often listen to the superficial conclusion. "It makes no difference whether a man goes to church or not—does he pay his debts?" It does make a difference. We know it does. We should say so, whether we are prepared or not to defend the proposition. It is not necessary to argue; but it is right to enter our exception to the agnostic proposition made in our presence.

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Figures That Tell a Story.

The population of France in 1870-1871 was 35,000,000. It is 40,000,000 now. There has been no emigration worthy the name. The population of Germany is 65,000,000. It was 40,000,000 in 1870-1871. It has sent out millions of emigrants in the intervening years. It has over a million of its sons in the big cities of France. What is wrong? France is reaping the fruit of Bismarck's naturalism and Voltaire's rationalism.—London Catholic Times.

The pure soul, which is now hidden from the eyes of the world, shall one day shine before the angels in the sunlight of eternity.

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