

ilities so dear to the Church at all times, and so devoted to the sufferings of the soul and of the body; nothing of all this was spared. With a systematic bitterness and a singular perfidy, they labored incessantly in distilling the venom of calumny, and spreading it by twenty different organs over all that is in our eyes the purest and the most to be respected. And whenever any Catholic has appeared inclined to face the storm, invoking the natural right of self-defence and the liberty of reply, he has immediately become the object of the tender mercies of our literary braves, or has been denounced by our political oracles as a turbulent and factious disturber of the State.

It is true that they who most frequently reproach the Catholic in these terms, are the very men or the very parties who have made themselves remarkable in the way of turbulence and faction; whose entire political existence has been passed in hampering the Government; whose whole ability has been expended in braving power; who are always preaching to the country a perpetual discontent, either with reason or without it; but who, so soon as Religion lifts up her voice to complain also, become transported with a sudden passion for silence, and preach no duty but one of passive obedience.

And what is the offence which the Church has given to these men? That in these days of freedom the Church claims to be free. This is her crime.

These men, and others, among many grave errors, entertain the idea that none but the clergy are interested in the freedom of the Church.—Nothing can be more false.

In a social and political point of view, the freedom of the Church is the apanage and guarantee of the lay citizen, at least as much as of the priest. You are, perhaps, surprised at this, Messieurs; but I repeat it. Yes, it is the citizen, it is the layman, who is peculiarly interested in seeing that the spiritual superiors whom his faith imposes on him should be free, and it is especially to his advantage, and not alone to the advantage of his clergy, that their liberty should be defended, and if necessary, reconquered for them. The independence of the clergy is, in politics, and in a Catholic country, altogether analagous to the irremovableness of the judges.

Why are the judges endowed with this irresponsibility, this fixedness of tenure, of the Bench? Is it for their pleasure, for their personal interest? Not the least in the world. It is for the sake of those who are amenable to justice—for the sake of all the citizens; it is that these citizens may be confident that good and impartial justice will be done to them, independently of the will or the wish of men in power. Wherefore should the State acknowledge in Bishops and priests an in-

delible character, an independent authority? Is it to flatter their pride, or to augment their power? No, it is for us; for our individual personal security; and in order that we may never discover the denomination of the State within the region of the denomination and the soul, wherein no temporal power ought ever to be permitted to penetrate.

It especially concerns us lay men, then, to maintain in its purity and integrity the liberty of the Church. The reason is a very simple one. It is for us an imperative and sovereign necessity to know thoroughly that the authority in which we acknowledge the right to bend our consciences and understandings under the yoke of the Divine faith should be free from every human yoke and every human influence. Let Protestants and Rationalists resign themselves to another state of things, nothing is more simple. The faith of Protestants gives them the right and the mission to judge of and to contest the authority of their ministers. Thus we see in England, Sweden, Prussia, wherever the Protestant Church is connected with the State, the sovereign and unlimited influence of power accepted and exerted without resistance. As to the Rationalists, who have no priests, or if they have, employ them only to baptize or bury them, what does it signify to them that the relation of this species of functionary with power should be a relation of independence? On the contrary, as they themselves may pretend most frequently to the monopoly of this temporal power, it is their express interest to subject religion to it.

But for us, as sincere, consistent, and practical Catholics, it is altogether otherwise. We are not "strong minds," but lowly minded. Before we become peers, deputies, electors, or citizens, we believe and we feel that we are Christians and sinners; and that we have need of healing, consolation, and pardon from others than ourselves, from Bishops and priests divinely instituted for that purpose. Obligated, then, by our faith to be docile and submissive to the authority of the Church in all that concerns faith and conscience, it is our sovereign and imprescriptible interest that this authority should present itself to us in all the majesty of its divine independence. In order to justify and influence our obedience we must keep repeating to ourselves that we freely obey a free power; free in the exercise of its spiritual rights; free everywhere and always, according to the definition of the late Pope Pius VIII., "*Libera est institutio divina nullique obnoxia terrane potestati intemerata sponsa agni Christi Jesu.*"—(Brief to the bishops of the Upper Rhine, 30th June, 1830.) If it were otherwise, if it were possible that the Catholic laity should suspect that the men whom they recognise as their guides, their councillors, their doctors, and teachers of the spiritual life, were at bottom only the instruments.