

The Catholic Register.

"Truth is Catholic; proclaim it ever, and God will effect the rest."—BALMEZ.

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CATHOLIC DIGEST FOR 1892.

A YEAR is but a short time in the existence of the Universal Church; but it is well worthy of notice, as it gives an idea on a small scale of the reverses and triumphs of that great body on earth. The year of grace, 1892, which has just gone from us, was a year of hope and promise. In its general tendencies it was similar to the other years of this half century, in which men seem disposed to make the Church some reparation for the ravages their predecessors of the past century had made in her fields. It was signalized also by the tightening of the bonds which, since the days of her Divine Founder have united the Church of Christ to the cause of the poor and suffering. The enlightened Pontiff who sits in the Chair of Peter has set the example of accepting what is good in modern life and thought while repressing its evil tendencies, and he has been ably assisted in this policy of conciliation by the circle of eminent men who compose the Sacred College of Cardinals.

In Italy, however, and in Rome itself, the Sovereign Pontiff has not been successful in gaining that liberty of action so necessary for the proper administration of the affairs of the Catholic world; and the Italians, though weighed down by an immense debt, excessive taxation, an oppressive military system, and organized misgovernment, have not yet learned from their troubles to do justice to their spiritual head. The country is daily going from bad to worse; and brigandage, suicide and divorce, those daughters of atheism, are daily becoming of more frequent occurrence; and yet, on account of the strange inertia of the large Catholic population, a Liberal Government still misrepresents the country in Rome. One occurrence will go to show the blind hatred of these men against everything Catholic. During the Columbus celebration a collection of Catholic societies, which were paying honor to the great discoverer as an Italian and a Catholic, were attacked in the streets of Rome by a mob urged on by a member of the Chamber of Deputies. It was an act worthy of these would-be apostles of enlightenment, that they should seek to dishonor the memory of the man who was one of the most important agents in bringing about our boasted modern civilization.

Another event will also go far to dispel the idea some Catholics have held that the Holy Father has sufficient liberty in his own sex. Some peaceful French Catholics, who had made a pilgrimage to Rome to testify their loyalty to the Sovereign Pontiff were mobbed on the streets on a trumped-up charge of insulting the usurper who sits in the Quirinal.

On an appeal being made by French citizens to their Government, that public-spirited body responded with an order to the bishops not to form any more pilgrimages, out of regard doubtless, for the feelings of their brother-infidels in Italy. The Bishop of Aix, M. Gouthe-Soulard, firmly but respectfully asserted to the Minister of Public Worship his right as a Catholic and a citizen to act freely in this matter. In consequence of this spirited declaration

of his rights, he was placed on trial and fined 3,000 francs for insulting that most august functionary.

This proceeding on the part of the French Government was all the more uncalled for, since His Holiness, in a letter to the hierarchy of France, decided that French Catholics should accept the republican constitution of France, and turn their efforts to repealing the obnoxious laws which disgrace their statute book; and the Cardinals, as well as many leaders of the Right, had already announced their intention of adhering to the policy of the Pope. Indeed, the immediate cause of this was the action of Cardinal Lavigerie in proposing the toast of "The French Republic" on board the flag-ship of the squadron at Algiers. In spite of this friendly attitude, however, the Government has blindly pursued its course of petty persecution, just enough, perhaps, in the Providence of God to rouse the Catholic people to the fact that they should imitate their brethren in Belgium and Germany in doing their duty at the polls, and turning out the scoundrels whose misdeeds even now cast disgrace on the French nation in the eyes of the world.

In the internal administration of the Church the most important changes were the appointment of Cardinal Ledochowski as Prefect of the Propaganda and the election of Father Martino as General of the Jesuits. The now Cardinal Prefect was prepared for his exalted dignity by the trials of persecution. When he was Archbishop of Posen he was imprisoned by Bismarck under the notorious May Laws for maintaining his rights as a Catholic prelate. And now the once mighty Cancellor is in danger of his own liberty in the Empire he formed, and his victim is second in authority in the Universal Church. Truly the Lord "hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble."

The condition of the Church in Germany to-day is a subject of consolation to every Catholic heart. It is only twenty years since the inauguration of the Kulturkampf, or Penal Laws, against the Church, and now Bismarck is deprived of power mainly through the influence of the great Catholic party, and all the obnoxious laws have been repealed except that relating to the Jesuits. And there is now a strong probability that the Centre may force that act of justice also from the Government, in return for their support on the Army Bill. But the most favorable sign of the times was the bill introduced by the Prussian Government for the education of every child in the kingdom according to the religion of its parents—to the end, as the Emperor remarked, that no child in Prussia might be brought up without a knowledge of God. The bill, though supported by the Centrists and Conservatives, was withdrawn on account of the violent opposition of the Liberal parties. However, the fact that such a sweeping measure could be introduced at the express desire of the Emperor himself is a refreshing sign of the progress of religious education.

The happy state of affairs which exists in the German Empire is mainly due, under God, to the zeal and abilities of the great Catholic leader, Windthorst, who, twelve months since, went to his rest covered with years and honors. In his case, the good he did

was not "interred with his bones." It lives after him in the great party which his energy constructed, and in the example he has set to persecuted Catholics of every age and clime to use the means Providence gives them to free the Church from oppression.

In England the Church is shadowed by a sense of loss, though it is a loss which has long been expected. In the month of January Henry Edward, Cardinal Manning, passed to his rest. His loss was not felt by the Church alone—a nation mourned him. But he will be missed in a special manner by the Church, which he found an infant and left strong and beautiful, worthy to take a place in the cennel of the Lord. His successor, Archbishop Vaughan, is fitted in every respect to fill the position his death left vacant; but it will be long ere the people of England forget the great English Cardinal, Catholic in every sense of the word, who showed to this unbelieving generation that the cause of Christ and the cause of suffering humanity are one.

The stream of conversion which he did so much to set in motion is still flowing in; and though the sanguine expectations of many Catholics have been disappointed, the position of the Church has in every way been much improved, and there is still great reason to hope that in the Providence of God Catholic England—the dream and prayer of so many pious souls for 300 years—is reserved as a future triumph of the Church.

A gratifying occurrence was the election of Ald. Stuart Knill as Lord Mayor of London. As he was a staunch Catholic, and unwilling personally to attend the services of the Established Church in connection with his position, there were some objections against his election; but a sense of justice and respect for his conscientious action carried the day, and he was elected by the almost unanimous vote of the Livery.

Among other European occurrences the celebration by which the Spaniards honored the memory of Christopher Columbus is worthy of special mention. It was a splendid tribute of an intensely Catholic nation to the great discoverer. The year was also marked by a grand Catholic Congress at Seville. The outbreaks of anarchy early in the year were the work of foreigners, and have quite died out among the people. His Holiness paid a beautiful compliment to the Queen of Portugal by presenting her with the Golden Rose. In Belgium, the elections resulted in the return of the Clerical party to power, and the census of Switzerland shows that the Church is gaining ground even in the strongholds of Calvinism.

But to give any proper idea of the history of the Church in these times, attention must be given to her missionary labors which may remain as the important events of history among nations yet to be, when the petty persecutions of European potentates have become but a disagreeable recollection of an unwise past. The Sacred College and the religious orders have been making strenuous efforts to propagate the truths of the Gospel among those who sit in darkness. One of the most gratifying triumphs was the conversion of the Patriarch of the

Nestorians, with most of his followers. This heresy has been in existence for fourteen centuries, and the thought that the grace of God has reached them at last will give new strength to those who hope the day will come when Northern Europe will see a second Age of Faith.

In China the Church has been a church of suffering. In many places secret societies, actuated by the same anti-Christian spirit as their brethren in Europe, burned the mission buildings and slaughtered priests and neophytes. A Catholic, however, never sees any reason to despair on account of persecution; he knows that in more ways than one the Church suffering approaches nearest to the Church triumphant. The time may come for China when the martyrs of 1892 are honored on the altars of the Church throughout the length and breadth of that vast Empire. In Japan the year was signalized by the creation of a hierarchy with titles drawn from the Japanese Secs. It is not an event important in itself; but it is significant of the progress of the Church in that land, where, three centuries ago, St. Francis Xavier preached with so much fruit. The progress of the Church in Japan is peaceful at present. The sprinkling of the blood of her Martyrs has been on her doorpost there these 300 years, and the angel of destruction respects the sign and passes over in silence.

The work which Father Damien carried on among the lepers is being continued as quietly and unostentatiously as he began it. Catholics, who are accustomed to such examples of self-sacrifice among their missionaries, find in this no reason for wonder, but the admiration of the Protestant world shows that such deeds of Christian heroism are the exclusive glory of that Church which holds in her keeping the fountains of supernatural favors.

Africa, which is to this 19th century what America was to the 15th, is a special field of missionary endeavor. The soldiers of Christ have shown themselves even more eager in enlarging His dominions than the temporal powers in acquiring new possessions. In the north, Cardinal Lavigerie has been doing wonders to restore the ancient glories of the church of Augustine and Cyprian. His new missionary body, "The White Fathers of the desert," have had great success in carrying out his wise designs for the conversion of the tribes of the Sahara and the suppression of the slave trade. It is indeed fitting that a prince of that church which abolished slavery in Europe should be the instrument in wiping out the last vestige of that curse in its very home. The death of their great Cardinal a few months ago will be a severe trial to his young community, but there are many men in its ranks quite capable of carrying out the work he began.

In Central Africa the Church has been suffering persecution. The majority of the people of Uganda, with their King, had been converted to the faith, and the Protestant minority rebelled, and, with the aid of the Mohammedans and the officers of the East Africa Company, massacred the Catholics and deposed the King. The British Government has the affair at present under consideration; and there is every reason to hope that they will