

The Religious Crisis in France

(Count de Mun, in The National Review.)

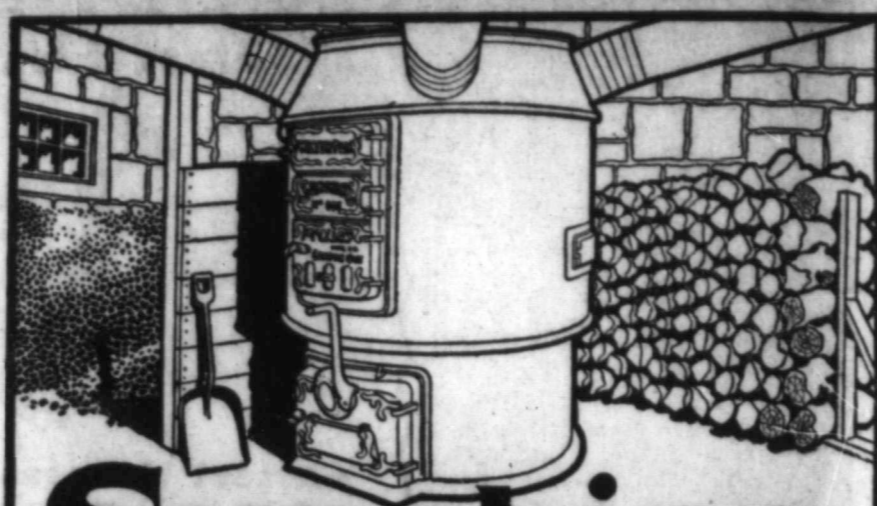
When, last year, the National Review did me the honor to invite me to write an article on the subject of the religious crisis which agitates France, I was, to my great regret, unable to give an immediate assent to its kind request. Now, after an interval of several months, propose to discharge the debt which I then contracted; and though, perhaps, I owe an apology to the Review and to its readers for my long delay, I have, nevertheless, certain reasons for congratulating myself on my procrastination. The political situation in France is now, so far as the religious struggle is concerned, far more sharply defined than it then was. The march of events, which could have been foreseen a year ago by any one who was in a position to follow closely the natural development of affairs, enables me to-day to substitute arguments based on actual facts for the conjectures which I should then have had to make in order to make myself intelligible to the English public. After stating what those events are, I shall attempt to demonstrate their logical connection, to examine their cause from the point of view of history and philosophy, and to discover what their probable consequences will be. I shall hope thereby to establish the fact that the struggle which is maintained in this country by the Catholics with the support of the really liberal section of the intellectual community far transcends the bounds of a purely political conflict and deserves the sympathetic attention of all foreigners who take an interest in the future of Christianity.

I do not deceive myself as to the difficulties attendant on the task which I have undertaken, for I know how different are the mental attitude, the manners and customs, and the intellectual habits of England and France, which, though they have become so familiar with each other owing to their geographical position and the relations produced by continual contact, are yet so widely sundered by their character, their historical development, and their social conceptions. I hope I shall not offend the readers of the National Review by saying that ignorance, more especially of the conditions in which the religious life of the two nations develops itself, is as great on one side of the Channel as on the other; and that many Englishmen, even among those who are animated by the most sincere Christian spirit, and perhaps even Catholic Englishmen, have failed to understand the character of the struggles to which, in the last few years, that development has given rise. That inability to accurately appreciate the position is, in my opinion, the outcome not only of the erroneous view of certain facts which is entertained by the press, but springs from a remoter and deeper source: namely, from insufficient study which need not surprise us in the case of Englishmen, inasmuch as very few Frenchmen are in the same boat of that event, so great and so complex both as regards its causes and its effects, which, from the point of view of philosophy and social science, dominates the whole of our history: I mean the Revolution of 1789. In the course of this article I shall more than once have occasion to insist on the fact of that domination, for in my view it lies at the very root of the question under consideration and alone can make clear the meaning of what is happening and threatens to happen in the religious world of France. For the sake of clearness I must begin with a statement of the facts which have given rise to such a commotion in our midst.

It is in this connection that the delay of which I have unintentionally been guilty has been actually advantageous; the facts can now be more clearly stated. Last year, at the time when this Review asked for my assistance, two particularly striking events had attracted its attention and that of the English public in general. One was the recent passing of an Act of Parliament, the provisions of which had been introduced and championed in both Chambers by M. Waldeck-Rousseau, the President of the Council, whereby the religious Congregations were removed from the operation of the general law, and were subjected to special treatment; the other was the outbreak of an excessively lively spirit of resistance, provoked by an abusive interpretation of that Act, and which, more especially in the Breton Departments, where religious faith is still an extremely active force, went so far as to give rise to violent conflicts with the authorities and with the armed forces which were summoned to assist them. I will examine each of these events in turn, and then will proceed to show how far more serious for the Catholics the situation has now become.

The mere fact that a law dealing with associations was a necessity in France suffices to prove the existence of a state of affairs which is peculiar to my country, and is calculated to surprise many of those who, like the English, are accustomed to the various features of corporate life. At the very outset of the Revolution, the French Revolution shows itself. Its chief social characteristic manifested itself in the establishment of the principle of individualism, and by the violent destruction of all organized bodies of spontaneous growth; and the religious associations, which are nowadays designated by the name of "Congregations," had less chance than any of escaping the results of the sweeping measure, for the reason that in the minds of the first members of the Constituent Assembly, the feelings awakened by the philosophical doctrines of the eighteenth century allied themselves to the general mad passion for universal leveling.

All associations were abolished by the Revolution. A few years later, when the reorganization of the new France was effected, the penal code gave the final sanction to the individualistic regime by a clause which prohibited all meetings of more than twenty persons. Corporate life, which for centuries had been as powerful and as productive in France as in the neighboring countries, was thus destroyed; and therewith disappeared the Province with its distinctive characteristics, the Commune with its franchises, and the trade guild with its special organization. Those institutions were forms of corporate existence, in its political as-



Sushine Furnace

—burns coal, coke or wood with equal facility.

Flues, grates, fire-pot and feed-doors, are specially constructed to burn any kind of fuel, and a special wood grate is always supplied.

Sold by all enterprising dealers. Write for booklet.

McClary's

London, Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg, Vancouver, St. John, N. B.

pect, just as the monastic association was its religious manifestation. I say that it was destroyed, but I ought to say that it was left in a state of suspended animation, for it is not in the power of man to abolish for ever the effects of a natural right and of one of the inherent needs of humanity. Events soon proved the truth of this statement. The religious associations, for the reason that they answer to the requirements of certain characteristics of the Christian soul, in which faith lights the mystic flame of a spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion, were the first to reappear, even before the revolutionary storm had completely lulled; and soon, by degrees, as the work of reconstituting the social edifice proceeded, the necessity of providing for the requirements of the poorer and for popular education, which had become almost entirely disorganized, induced the newly constituted authorities to seek their aid. To do so was one of the earliest acts of the First Consul. It is true that the laws which dissolved the associations were not formally abrogated; they merely became a dead letter, purely by reason of the moral and political circumstances of the age; and nowhere it is better understood than in England, where so many ancient statutes exist and nominally have the force of law, but in reality have ceased to exert the slightest influence, that desuetude may be tantamount to abrogation.

But how did it come to pass that in the new society, the product of the Revolution, these moral forces came so promptly to the assistance of the religious associations? Under the old regime, in which the Catholic Church and the Monarchy were so closely allied, politics and religion were intimately connected with each other. The king gave effect to the laws of the Church in his character of lay bishop, as the saying was, and monastic life, as everything else, was under his control. The ecclesiastic, bound by his vows as regards both spiritual and temporal matters, suffered a form of disfranchisement which was almost equivalent to civil death; consequently, he was not a citizen in the sense in which others were citizens. The mighty blast of liberty, which swept away those institutions of a past age which had been undermined by long existing abuses and by the influence of the new doctrines, were bound to destroy the old conception of the religious life. The civil constitution of the monastic orders collapsed at the same time as all the other institutions of the old regime. In the eyes of the new society the members of religious bodies were simply citizens, subject, like others, to the general law and, consequently, endowed with the rights and the liberties which belonged to all other members of the community. It is perfectly clear that one of those rights is the right to live with others and to pray with others, to accept certain duties, and to share the conscience without involving any civil consequences. This implies the right to worship and the right to teach, both of which are directly derived from liberty of conscience.

Such is the position of the religious orders in the French society which sprang from the Revolution of 1789. I do not think that any Englishman will find therein anything contrary to the interests of the community. I will return to this point later on when I come to examine the arguments with which the enemies of the religious Congregations attempt to justify the proscriptive measures of which these bodies have been made the victims.

But before I proceed further I must conclude the brief historical retrospect which is absolutely essential to a clear comprehension of the subject. As I have already remarked, the religious Congregations were not the only victims of the individualistic doctrines proclaimed by the Constituent Assembly of 1789. At the same time, and under the influence of the same ideas, the ancient structure of the provincial and communal organization which had been gradually undermined by the centralizing monarchical government, began to make room for a new administrative system, under which the state exercised control over all the elements of national activity. At the same time also the corporations of artisans, the nature of which had been only too completely altered by the interfering action of the royal power, lost their ancient influence by reason of the introduction of a system of control conceived solely in the interest of the Crown and were utterly suppressed; the working classes being deprived even of the liberty of meeting and taking steps to protect their common interests, the legitimacy of which the State refused to recognize. This was so utterly contrary to the ordinary natural rights of humanity that just as in the case of the laws which violated the liberty of conscience, it

was inevitable that the necessities of social life should immediately have their revenge. But whereas the spontaneous energy of religious faith and the pressing demands of charitable and educational needs soon sufficed to resuscitate the religious associations, in the economic world the revival came but slowly, for the reason that it was hampered by the existence of an unending state of war, by the resistance of successive governments in whom it produced an uneasy feeling, and by the opposition of the industrial magnates whose interests were threatened. The revival came, nevertheless, and proceeded to develop an ever-increasing vigor as and when the struggles to which the organization of labor gave rise rendered such development necessary. I shall not dwell upon the history of these social movements with which England has been made familiar by the rise of trade unions; to do so would be to go beyond the bounds of my present subject. All that it is necessary to establish is the fact that, by virtue of the inherent strength of the natural rights of mankind, the freedom of economic association again became a recognized institution and vindicated its rights before the legislature. It was for the first time tentatively recognized by a law passed in 1864, and received its definite legal sanction in 1884. All other civil associations were still for a long time forbidden; and it was only in 1901 that the general freedom of association was partially established and organized by law. I say partially, for here we touch the kernel of the question, and the law, which might have been a charter of liberties for all citizens without distinction, was in reality a proscriptive enactment directed against a whole section of the community; so much so that it can far more fairly be described as a law directed against the Congregations than as a law dealing with the right of association. What was the reason, and how did it come about, that the recognized right of all citizens was refused to the religious orders? It will be my task to try to supply the answer to this question.

For the sake of clearness I must begin by explaining to my readers the legal position occupied by the Congregations three years ago when the new law was introduced. The Legislative Assemblies at the time of the Revolution, carried away by their hatred of Catholicism, which was made manifest at the very outset of their labors and subsequently led to the commission of so many excesses, did not limit themselves to the abolition, as a natural result of the new principles, of the civil consequences of the vows pronounced by the religious orders. They first suppressed the monastic orders and then abolished all Congregations, not even excepting those the members of which were not bound by any perpetual vow and did not belong to the ecclesiastical profession. It is unnecessary for me to recall the sanguinary persecutions which accompanied these proscriptive edicts; the recollection of them is fresh in the memory of all. But in spite of it all, the imperious call of the Faith, and the irresistible attraction possessed by the most sacred of rights, soon brought about the resuscitation of some of the proscribed Congregations, and that too, in the very centre of persecution. I have pointed out, as soon as the social reorganization of the country took place under the guidance of Bonaparte, the sovereign authority hastened to have recourse to their assistance in order to provide for the care of the sick and for the education of the children of the poor. Both these influences gained in intensity under the various forms of government which followed during the course of the nineteenth century, with the result that, as the needs of modern society made unceasing demands for fresh forms of self-sacrificing devotion, the Congregations, both male and female, continued to multiply. In some cases they attached themselves to institutions which existed under the old regime; in others they formed entirely new bodies; but in every case they consecrated themselves to devotional exercises, to almsgiving, to charity, to education, and to the work of healing; a large number devoting their zealous activities to distant mission fields in the French colonies and in those of other countries where their services were readily and gratefully accepted. Nothing is more creditable to humanity, nothing proves more clearly the vital energy of religious faith, than that fruitful harvest of admirable work which was reaped on a soil which so recently had been devastated by such a frightful storm. It has often been pretended in the French Chambers and in the press that these manifestations of energy were enabled to take place only in consequence of a mistaken spirit of toleration, inas-

much as the Concordat, which was signed in 1801 by Pope Pius VII. and the First Consul, forbade the reconstitution of the Congregations which had been dissolved by the Revolution, by the very fact that it did not expressly contemplate such reconstruction. But that is a gross error and a deliberate misreading of the documents. As a matter of fact the first article of the Concordat of 1801 specifically states that "the Catholic religion shall be freely exercised in France." Now the liberty of the Catholic Church is complete and whole only if it can, free and untrammelled, fulfill its mission in its entirety, and if it is, as a necessary consequence, supplied with all the organs which it requires in order to be able to do its work. Another conception of liberty would amount to complete negation of its existence; for the fundamental condition of liberty is freedom to make use of that liberty. If it is the fact that the existence of the religious orders is not an essential feature of Christianity, it is, at all events, as far as the Catholic Church is concerned, a natural product of her teachings and a necessary factor in her organization; and this was so ever since the earliest centuries of the Christian era. I hope I shall have no great difficulty in making even my Protestant readers understand the object and the legitimate nature of those orders when I try to reply to the accusations levelled against them by their enemies in France. Looking at the question solely from the point of view of liberty, I say that the Catholic Church is obviously a better judge than her adversaries as to what factors constitute the sum-total of her essential properties. The celebrated Portalis expressed this fact very neatly in the speech which he made in the Legislative Assembly when he presented the new Concordat in the name of the First Consul. "When a new religion is sanctioned of an old one is maintained, the control which is exercised over it must be in accordance with the principles of that religion. The wish that is manifested and the power which it is desired to claim to arbitrarily improve religious ideas and institutions constitute a pretension which is contrary to the very nature of things."

Those words have an honest ring which proves that they were spoken in good faith. At the very moment when the discussion of the question of the Congregations was begun in France, Pope Leo XIII. affirmed in an important document not only his affection for those institutions, but also the reasons, founded on principles and on facts, which both justify their existence and make it an essential condition of the free exercise of the Catholic religion. After that I think the question ought to be regarded as settled. This is the first most important observation evoked by pretensions based on the silence of the Concordat of 1801 which is used as a weapon against the religious orders.

(To be Continued.)

The Catholic Clergy and Elections

London, May 7.—The correspondent of The Times at Paris says: Mgr. Lacroix, Bishop of Tarentaise, in a letter to the clergy of his diocese, has given an account of an audience granted him by the Pope on April 17th. Among the questions discussed was whether the clergy should intervene in electoral conflicts. There were differences of opinion on the subject even between the Bishops themselves, some advising abstention, others intervention.

Mgr. Lacroix was among the former, basing his attitude upon instructions by Leo XIII. He now has received similar counsels from Pius X. in almost the same terms. The Pope added: "When I was Bishop of Mantua, and afterwards Patriarch of Venice, I found that conflicts between the Pope and the parish priests almost always originated in some question affecting election. This is a delicate matter; the faithful are very susceptible and suspicious when a priest is tempted to encroach upon their independence in order to induce them to vote a particular way, and above all, when he is so imprudent as to approach them after the elections with having cast votes for the wrong side he arouses bitter animosity, which infallibly compromises his sacred functions."

"Nothing could be more laudable on the part of the priest than to take advantage of his rights as a citizen to vote in accordance with his conscience, but if he should, unhappily, rush into the electoral fray he will soon lose that esteem and sympathy which he needs for the fruitful exercise of his spiritual mission. This is the apostrophe of the Italian priest, but to the clergy of all countries in which universal suffrage is in force."

MORE EVIDENCE FROM MONTREAL

That Todd's Kidney Pills Always Cure Dropsy

It is a Kidney Disease and is Cured by Curing the Kidneys—Dodd's Kidney Pills never fail to Cure the Kidneys.

Montreal, Que., May 16.—(Special.)—Every day brings forth fresh proof that Dropsy is caused by diseased kidneys and that the one sure way to cure it is to make the kidneys strong and healthy by using Dodd's Kidney Pills. Mr. Geo. Robertson, 392 St. James street, this city, is one of those who has proved this beyond the shadow of a doubt. Mr. Robertson says:

"My feet were so much swollen from dropsy that when I got out of bed in the mornings I could hardly put them on the floor. My arms used to swell at times so that I could not put on my coat."

"I had to be tapped to relieve me of the terrible pains. On the advice of a friend I began to take Dodd's Kidney Pills, and before I had used the second box I began to feel better. Seven boxes cured me completely."

Rheumatism, Diabetes, Bright's Disease, are some of the many forms of Kidney Disease that Dodd's Kidney Pills never fail to cure promptly and permanently.

The wealth of a man consists in the number of things he loves and blesses and in the number of things he is loved and blessed by.



PAN-AMERICAN EXPOSITION
BUFFALO

GOLD MEDAL

AWARDED

Labatt's Ale and Porter

SURPASSING ALL COMPETITORS

OUR BRANDS



The O'Keefe Brewery Co. Limited
TORONTO.

TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Owing to the increased price of flour and the other materials necessary for making bread, and also being interested in the cost per loaf, I had an interview with Mr. H. C. Tomlin, proprietor of the Toronto Bakery on Bathurst St. relative to the price. Mr. Tomlin told me as far as he was aware there was no intention to increase the price at the present time, and he also said he hoped flour would not advance higher, making it necessary on his part to increase the cost per loaf. I was very pleased to know this as I use Tomlin's Bread in preference to others, some of which are very good.

Signed,
A CITIZEN.

THE DOMINION BREWERY CO., Limited

MANUFACTURERS OF THE
CELEBRATED

White Label Ale

TORONTO, ONTARIO

PRINCE CHARMING

"Oh!" said the young girl, sitting amongst the apple trees in the orchard, "now that I have finished with school, I am going to have such a lovely time, and bye and bye, when I meet Prince Charming, a still lovelier time, for then I will have a grand house and a carriage and—"

A shower of apple blossom petals broke the thread of her dream. Inside, over a hot stove, mother, too, dreamt dreams of the future. "Why should I call the child in to help me with the cooking?" she whispered softly to herself. "The coming years, when she has a husband and children to look after, will bring her work and care, and it's little enough I can do in the meantime but to let her have a real good time."

So mother continued to toil amongst the pots and pans, scolding the heat and discomfort of the kitchen on a broiling day, as is the way with mothers.

For a number of years the young girl found life a veritable garden of sweet, smiling flowers. Then a fierce storm came up out of the West, blowing with such force that in a few hours the old home lay a ruin and the apple orchard a waste. On the night of the storm father died, and mother—poor, tired mother—stayed behind only a little while longer.

Friends gathered round the young girl with offers of "good advice," which good advice, translated, generally read: "Something is sure to turn up." "You will get on, somehow." "Alas, good advice fails to go far in paying for bread and butter, so presently the young girl decided to go out into the big world and fight for a place for herself.

With a slight knowledge of many things, and a thorough knowledge of none, she found the art of earning a livelihood a more difficult matter than she imagined for to the right and to the left stood companies of women possessed of knowledge of how to do one thing well—by companies of men skilled in various arts and crafts.

In the old house, amid the apple trees, there had been room for sentiment. Among her fellow toilers the young girl speedily discovered that sentiment has no market value.

By the time she had learned through sore and sad experiences that the market is not going to pay for a badly cut skirt, on the ground that the worker is a poor orphan, lines had gathered around the blue eyes, gray hairs had forced their way amongst the threads of brow. At the chance remark of an acquaintance, a chance remark spoken, not unkindly, simply, "A blush rose beneath the brim of your hat is scarcely suitable now, dear," the young girl awoke suddenly to a realization of the bitter truth. She had grown old waiting for Prince Charming.

Once, just once, she had caught a glimpse of his plumed hat as he rode along the highway, in the distance, and on that occasion she had made a mistake in her work, with the result that at the end of the week her small wages were still smaller.

For a space the woman (the young girl no more) wept bitterly. Then, collecting her forces, she resolved to start afresh to build up, by the work of her own hands, unaided by Prince Charming, the little home, on whose walls might hang the pictures, the tokens, women love to gather on the journey through the world. Then, leaving the dream in the company of the blush rose, she went away into a country town.

Here she toiled early and late at a work requiring much attention, and in course of time, feeling sure that her feet stood on firm ground, she opened a tiny cake shop.

And the cake shop proved a great success, for the woman wrought, not as before, merely to fill in time while awaiting the advent of marriage, but with a fixed purpose. In

IF YOU ARE

RENTING

or working for someone else, why not get a farm of your own in

NEW
ONTARIO

For Particulars Write to

HON. E. J. DAVIS

Commissioner of Crown Lands
TORONTO, ONT.

EMPRESS HOTEL

Corner of Yonge and Gould Streets
TORONTO

TERMS: \$1.50 PER DAY

Electric Cars from the Union Station Every
Three Minutes.

RICHARD DESMETTE - PROPRIETOR

JAS. J. O'HEARN

PAINTER
DECORATOR
CALSO MINER
GLAZIER

161 QUEEN ST. WEST

Telephone Main 2677

Residence Phone Main 377

the old days her work had fluctuated in quality. It fluctuated no longer, for if the cakes were light on Monday they were equally light on Saturday, and her clock kept correct time.

One day, when she was engaged in lifting fragrant spice loaves from their tins on the counter, a shadow fell across the threshold of the shop, the shadow of the Prince who had colored her dreams.

"Oh, why," cried the woman, with a break in her voice, "have you kept me waiting so long, so long until my hair has grown gray, and the color has left my cheeks forever?"

"In the little wood at the foot of the hill," said Prince Charming, with a smile, "I have been waiting for years, through green summers and white winters, until you learnt—how to make bread."—Arrah Luen, in the Catholic Press.

This Has Tested It.—Time tests all things, that which is worthy lives; that which is inimical to man's welfare perishes. Time has proved Dr. Thomas' Electric Oil. From a few thousand bottles in the early days of its manufacture the demand has risen so that now the production is running into the hundreds of thousands of bottles. What is so eagerly sought for must be good.

Hardships and sorrows are oftentimes the fires which burn out the dross of selfishness from human hearts.

Every member of the human family is at some point on one or other of these two journeys—from God or toward God—where are you?