

in the world. Most of them are necessarily poor and quite unable to support themselves in any new sphere by their work, still less are they able to begin life afresh in any new country, where they can enjoy the liberty to serve God, which is denied them in their own. What is before these ladies no man can tell, and already we hear of nuns whose only course has been to ask dispensation from their religious vows and seek for the necessities of life by taking up the work of domestic servants, or of serving as shop-women behind the counter of Parisian millinery establishments.

Even when by the force of the law monasteries or convents have been closed, the congregations dissolved and the inmates dismissed, the unfortunate religious have not infrequently found themselves still under the iron heel of the law. If he preaches, or lectures after his secularisation, which as a priest he has surely a right to do, he can be prosecuted as recalcitrant and punished. By M. Combes' circular of April 1903 the Bishops of France were directed not to allow ex-religious to use the pulpits of their churches in their respective dioceses, and their refusal to be bound by such an arbitrary exercise of authority has been in certain cases punished by the suspension of their very inadequate salaries. In one case with which I am acquainted two secularised religious were received out of charity by the Superior of a diocesan College as assistant teachers. Immediately the college itself was closed by orders received from Paris. In another instance, two ladies of one family, after obtaining a dispensation from their vows, went home to their father's house. Here incautiously they kept up their pious practices and began to busy themselves in works of charity, and this becoming known, they received a visit from a commissary of Police, who informed them that two ex-religious living together were regarded as forming a "Congregation," and this was against the law.

Hundreds of other instances could be given of the harsh and deliberately cruel treatment which has been meted out to the members of the dissolved congregations. Taking the figures given by M. Waldeck-Rousseau in the debates of 1901 as correct, there were some 75,000 religious to be dealt with in the category of non-authorised congregations; and M. Combes is said to have received applications for authorisations for 12,890 houses. But matters have not stopped here. Religious life in France is now doomed to destruction. A new law absolutely forbids religious to exercise the profession of teaching for which previously they had been authorised. The Government does not consider previous authorisation by the State as anything more than an approval accorded for a period. What the State has once approved and authorised, says M. Combes, it can at some future time, if it thinks proper, declare to be "non"-authorised. It has now been thought proper, and the members of the authorised bodies, numbering some 55,000 religious, are now practically added to the list of the proscribed; and this means that their property will be seized by the State and that they will be cast out into the world. By the first of next month, October, 750 schools taught by the Christian Brothers, 1,054 schools for girls taught by religious women, and nearly 600 orphanages where the waifs and strays of the country were supported by the Christian Charity of the faithful and tended by the devoted care of the Sisters, are to be closed and the remaining institutions, in number hardly less than 2000, are doomed to extinction at the will of the Government.

Nor, we may be sure, will this be the last act in the tragedy now being enacted before our eyes in France. Already it has been made clear even to those who might have any doubt previously about M. Combes' object, that the suppression of the religious Orders is merely an incident in a general campaign against the Catholic Church. The two circulars addressed to the Bishops of France in April 1903, directing them what preachers they were to employ in their pulpits, and ordering them to close all churches and places of pilgrimage, which were not strictly parochial, are in themselves plain indications of the lengths that M. Combes is prepared to go; the almost universal refusals of the bishops to obey these mandates, is, however, proof that they understand the situation in the same way, and are ready to suffer any pains and penalties rather than be unfaithful to the duties of their sacred charge. What possible explanation, too, can be given of M. Combes' prohibition to the priests of

Brittany and to those of the Basque provinces to give religious instructions to the children of their parishes in their native language, or to preach, save in the French tongue, except that he desired to put a stop to religious teaching of all kinds, seeing that multitudes of the parents and children in these districts only understand the Breton or the Basque languages? The words of the Bishop of Orleans, addressed last year on March 24, to the religious of his diocese, represent no more than the truth. He advised them to remain at their posts and keep open their schools, their refuges for the sick and aged, their "creches" for infants and their private hospitals, until they were turned out by force. "Reverend Mother," he says, "the object of attack by the decrees against the Congregations is not you and your communities but God himself. It is impossible now to make a mistake on this point. It is against God and Christianity that all this persecution is directed. It is not because the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul wear a grey dress—it is not because Sacre-Coeur nuns wear a black one, that they are being driven from the teaching profession. The reason, and the only reason, is that you all, Sisters and nuns alike, teach the Christian faith. God is the enemy. God is to be exiled from the soul of the young child. It is not difficult to foresee what the future conduct of our present masters will be. Yesterday they drove out those religious orders who did not ask for authorisation. To-day they are driving out those who did solicit it. To-morrow they will close all the teaching establishments which are at present authorised. The day after they will close the central houses, the 'maisons meres', whither they are now forcing you to go. The congregations of France must understand that, as long as the present state of things continues in the political world, their case is prejudged and hopeless and that they must endure much desolation and bitter trial."

Since the Bishop wrote these words events have justified his forecast. M. Combes is carried along on the flood he has let loose. There were indications that even he, like the real originator of the mischief, M. Waldeck-Rousseau, would have wished to pause in his career of destruction and temporarily at least to close down the flood-gates. The very financial condition of the country should be sufficient to make him as a politician desirous not to add to its burdens. Having already to face large annual deficits in the revenue of the country, it is hard to understand how any statesman can contemplate the additional expenditure necessitated by the suppression of schools, and hospitals, and asylums which the religious had supported. An immediate expenditure of over 1,000,000 pounds sterling (that is about 5,000,000 dollars) for the building of schools: of more than 190,000 pounds (950,000 dollars) for fitting them up; and of something like half a million yearly for the payment of new teachers, is the official calculation of what M. Combes' policy in regard to schools is going to cost the nation. Then, it has been stated on authority that there are at least 50,000 old and infirm people, who have been hitherto supported by the charity, clothed by the charity, served by the charity, of the religious. These can hardly be left to starve on the roads and in the fields of fair France. What will they cost the nation annually? What is the least? Shall we say ten pounds a head? Even then we have a yearly expenditure of 2,500,000 pounds and no provision made for sheltering them. Nothing less than madness—a senseless hatred of religion—could have initiated so suicidal a policy when it is obvious to the most superficial observer that the public revenue, in spite of the high rate of taxation, does not yearly suffice to meet the current and necessary expenditure. And yet this is only the beginning. Beyond the mere monetary question, there is also the serious doubt raised by competent men as to the possibility of the government being able to furnish proper teaching in secondary schools to replace the professors they have exiled. M. Brunetiere in the "Revue des Deux Mondes" stated his belief that the persecuting policy of the Government will cost some millions of francs for secondary education. As for primary education, M. Combes' law destroys some 165 schools and the teaching Brothers alone instructed some 300,000 children. M. Ferdinand Buisson, an authority well known and recognised in France, considers that a grave peril to the State

has thus been created by the necessary appointment of inexperienced, ill-educated and untrained teachers to take the posts rendered vacant by the present policy of the Government.

But the grave injury inflicted upon the State by the laws against the Congregations is not our concern as foreigners. We are interested, of course, only or mainly, in the religious side of the question, and the other matter is important only as showing how the Government, with full knowledge of the cost, determined to persevere in its work of destruction, and is thus betraying its animus and its real motives. It was obvious enough in the debates, which accompanied the passing and the execution of the law, "Whether just or unjust" "whether it will be costly and even ruinous to the nation," they appear to say, "We will have the law of suppression proclaimed by the 'bloc' which supports M. Combes." What is it that impels them? Can there be any doubt whatever? It is passion, and it is hatred, and hatred not merely of the religious life, but hatred of the Catholic religion, of Christianity, and even apparently hatred of God Himself. It is the spirit of M. Paul Bert—forgotten though he may now be, but triumphant and in activity.

It was of course impossible that matters could rest long where the dissolution of the religious congregations had left it. Pope Leo XIII had seen in sorrow, but in silence, the action of the French Government in repressing the religious life in France. For fear of greater evils, which might have befallen the Church in that country, the Pontiff's voice had not been raised in protest. The dominant party in the State, however, were not content with his successor in the campaign against religion, and clamored for the abrogation of the "Concordat" between France and the Vatican, which for a century had regulated the relations of Church and State. M. de Pressense, an eminent member of the Senate, even drafted a bill for its abolition. What this would mean to religion in the country we are not called upon to discuss. I mention it merely to show that long before the late incidents which led to the withdrawal of the French Ambassador from the Vatican, the abolition of the Concordat was already being discussed in Paris as a measure of practical politics, and as an item in the programme of the Government. "A decent pretext," which I believe, is the phrase used on such occasions, was all that was needed to precipitate the conflict. This was found, first in the protest made by Pius X against the visit of M. Loubet to Rome, which was seized upon by the irreligious section in Rome as a fitting opportunity to insult the Pope in his own city; and now, the other day by the Pope's action in calling to Rome two of the French Bishops to answer to certain charges, which had been made against them in the administration of their spiritual functions.

This last offence of the Pope and his Secretary of State was loudly

proclaimed as a manifest breach of the Concordat. The cry was taken up without consideration and it is still repeated in the press of this country, as well as in that of England and other European countries. In an interview, which one of the leading New York papers lately published, with M. Combes, the fact that the Pope had broken the Concordat is stated over and over again. This week in an article on "Church and State in France" printed in the pages of a widely read weekly, we read about the Pope's "recent assumption of the right to revoke at will French Bishops, regardless of the Concordat." What are the real facts? It cannot be too widely known that there is nothing whatsoever in that famous treaty between Napoleon and Pius VII—called the Concordat—which prohibits the Pope from dealing directly with any individual bishop. It is surely a matter of common sense. How is it possible to conceive for one moment that any pope could have surrendered the exercise of his spiritual functions in governing the Church in the way suggested by M. Combes? How could the supreme spiritual authority govern subjects, who have taken an oath to obey him in all matters spiritual, if it had its hand fettered by such a compact with the temporal authority as the present French rulers would have the world believe? It is obvious that no pope, even when constrained by overwhelming necessity, or to purchase any advantages whatever, could sign away so necessary a factor in the administration of the Church of Christ. As a matter of fact, no such claim to fetter the papal authority over the French bishops was ever put forward by Napoleon or by his agents during the negotiations for the Concordat, nor was any such restriction introduced into the celebrated Convention agreed to between the Pope and the Emperor of the French.

It is indeed true that subsequently certain additions known as the "Articles Organiques" were made in France to the provisions of the Concordat. These may be taken to cover the point raised by M. Combes' government; but these form no part of the Concordat itself. The popes from Pius VII to Pius X have never for a single moment accepted these "articles", which were originally framed solely by the French authorities without the knowledge or sanction of the Church and were directed against the free action of her organization. M. Emile Ollivier, in his "Manuel de droit Ecclesiastique" says that no bishop, priest, or instructed Catholic layman ever attributed the least value to these "Articles Organiques". They were mere State police acts—and at the time of their first issue, Pius VII declared that these new provisions formed no part of his agreement with the French Government: that this agreement was embodied in the provisions of the Concordat only and that these appended articles were altogether "unknown to him."

If as a fact, when no principle was

involved directly, the ecclesiastical authority has bowed to necessity and carried out the spirit of the Organic Articles, it is because during the years of their existence they have been administered, on the whole, with moderation and by statesmen who, even though not Catholics themselves, were gentlemen and sincerely anxious for the welfare of the Church itself. But with a hostile—not to say irreligious—government in power and with officials whose policy is plainly, if not frankly, directed against the religion of the majority of Frenchmen, it has been long obvious that the rupture which has now taken place was inevitable. The Cardinal Secretary of State, in one of the letters on this matter published in the "Vatican White Book", points out that the very acts now complained of by M. Combes as forming a breach of the Concordat by the present Pope, have previously been admitted without difficulty when it was to the interest of the Secular power to assist the ecclesiastical authorities in the right government of the Church in France. It is abundantly clear that, if the popes seem to have hitherto tacitly acquiesced in the terms of the Organic Articles, at the same time they have never recognised them as binding. The Concordat alone they have admitted as a treaty and its provisions alone have they regarded themselves as pledged to respect. This being so, it is entirely to misrepresent the true facts of the case to declare that by the acts of Pius X or those of his Secretary of State either the letter or the spirit of the Concordat has been broken. M. Combes and his followers are so anxious to see the Concordat set aside and yet so unwilling to appear as the culprits themselves, that they do not stop to enquire into the truth of their statements. They appear also to forget that by their whole policy against religion in France they appear, to outsiders, to have set aside the very first of the articles of the Concordat itself, which secures to all the full and free exercise of the Roman Catholic Religion.

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