



A Magazine of General Literature.

VOL. IV.

MONTREAL, APRIL, 1879.

No 6.

CELIBACY OF THE CLERGY.

THERE is nothing in the Catholic Church either of dogma or morals which has received from outsiders so fierce and concentrated an opposition as the celibacy of her clergy and religious bodies. This holy practice, which has indeed nothing at all to do with the *essentials* of religion, and which is only of counsel for the religious and a wise regulation for the clergy, appears unwittingly to have drawn down upon itself the severest censures alike of Protestant and unbeliever. And this is all the more unaccountable because even the ancient Pagans admitted its congruity. Tibullus sings:

"You also I command to stand at a distance;  
depart from this altar  
You whom Venus held last night in her  
embrace.

The Gods love chaste things. Come then  
with pure robe,  
And draw water from the fountain with  
chaste hands."

(Eleg. I L. 2).

Demosthenes goes still further. If the Latin poet exacts chastity only for a few days from those who serve the altar, Greece's greatest orator demands it for a whole life time. In his oration against Timocrates, he says:

"I indeed most assuredly, think, that he who approaches the sacred altar and is about to handle the sacred things, or to take care of what pertains to the Gods ought to be chaste not only for an appointed number of days but that throughout his whole life, he should abstain from disgraceful hankerings of this kind."

This is sufficiently clear and pronounced on the part of our Athenian orator.

How vastly superior the *Pagan* to the Protestant or infidel mind.

Our enemies are unreasonable. The Catholic Church, far from *commanding* celibacy, *forbids* any of her children to enter thereon without a particular vocation and without a decided inclination. Where then the right to interfere with such a call, and such an inclination? It is opposed to nature—you say. What then? Has it ever been proved that Nature is God of this life, much less of the life to come? But is it opposed to nature? On the contrary, it is following the taste which nature inspires, as we have seen from the extracts above.

That the Church exacts celibacy from her *priests*, we admit; but then she no where commands men to become *priests*. Not so the State. In most European continental countries the State commands celibacy during military service and rigidly exacts military service. What have our infidel philosophers, who exalt the State so much above the Church and who cry out so loudly against ecclesiastical celibacy, to say to this?

And not only does the Church *not* enforce the Priesthood upon any man but she exacts from her postulants the strongest proofs of their fitness; she does not admit them until long, after they have attained an age, when they will be fully capable of judging of the nature of the things they ask, and in all she seeks their greater happiness. Can our Protestant and infidel gainsayers show that their much cherished State is