

THE STAND OF PIUS X.

The following editorial by a Protestant on the Pope's Encyclical deserves attention: The Papal Encyclical upon the French Separation Law is a brave and uncompromising challenge. For this reason it has caused no small amount of irritation to that large section of opinion both in France and England which consciously or unconsciously holds that it is the primary duty of the Church to make its peace with the world. This Erastian and unchristian temper is the base of religion alike in England and in France, for in both countries it makes Caesar supreme over the Faith. Its forms and methods, of course, vary according to national characteristics. English Erastianism allows the State to legislate on matters appertaining to the Sacraments, and endows lay tribunals with the power of the keys. French Erastianism, at once more logical and more brutal, leaves dogmatic details alone, but makes the will of an atheistic Caesar supreme in the internal administration of the Church. So it comes about that the sort of French Catholic who in days past chiefly supported the Concordat on the ground that it subjected the Church to the State is intensely pained that the Pope should advise the Church to undergo temporal and even religious loss for the sake of a fundamental principle of Christianity. So keen is the vexation which exists in the camp of these Laodiceans, that Pius X., who takes his stand on a principle that is recognised quite as strongly by Calvinists as by Catholics, is in one moment denounced as an Ultramontane dreamer, and the next is pitted as the victim of some deplorable conspiracy of the sort which modern Liberalism, Monsignore Merry del Val. If justification were needed for this Papal action, it would be found in these criticisms upon it. When professing French Catholics insist on subservience in matters spiritual to an atheistic State, it is time for a protest against their cowardice. The only subject for regret is that the protest has been delayed so long. If in days gone by the Papacy in its relations with the French State had stood more on principle and less on expediency, if it had not (we quote the words of the Encyclical) supported "injustice on its love for the proud French nation"; if it had not sacrificed the spiritual interests and liberties of the Church to the Bourbon or Corsican autocracy, this Erastian heresy would never have taken root on French soil, and French Catholics would not today be trembling before a persecuting and intolerant faction. The Encyclical, the bravest thing in truth that has come from France from the Vatican since the day when Pius VI. hurled the "civil constitution" of the clergy in the faces of the men of the First Revolution, should herald the dawn of a new era in the annals of French Catholicism, an era in which the Church will abandon the Erastian superstition that has been her blight in the past, and set up against the Jacobin's enthusiasm for the republican State the Christian's zeal for religion and ordered liberty. One thing is certain. The Church can not lose more by an appeal to principle that she has lost by her unwise and Erastian compromises of the past. The details of the Encyclical are of less interest than the principle that it proclaims. The Pope has foreseen and rebuffed in advance the charge that in refusing to recognize the associations cultuelles he is condemning in France a system that his Church tolerates in some other countries. It is true that on canonical principles there is no objection to the employment of laymen as the trustees of ecclesiastical property. In England and in other countries before the Reformation the laity either as individuals or as corporate bodies, exercised considerable powers in reference to the fabrics and temporal possession of the church, as the common law powers of our churchwardens testify. In the Roman Catholic Church in America today a similar state of things exists, and ecclesiastical associations of a like character are allowed in Germany. These precedents however have little application to the state of things contemplated by the French law. That law proposes to transfer Church property to "associations legally established in conformity with the general regulations of the form of worship which they desire to maintain." The function of deciding whether a particular association falls within this definition pertains to the Council of State, a body which is in great measure the creature of the executive for the time being. In the Senate it was admitted that the disapproval by the bishop of the association would not necessarily prevent its recognition by the Council of State. (The fact by the way that a secular and partisan tribunal to decide on grave questions of faith and morals is a proof that French Republicanism, while depriving the Church of all State aid, intends to preserve and exaggerate the worst features of the Erastianism of the Bourbons and Bonapartes.) This conception of associations of laymen for ecclesiastical purposes responsible to a Council and State and independent of the bishop is absolutely un-Catholic. When as in Medieval England or modern America the laity are trusted with ecclesiastical functions, they are bound to act in obedience to the bishop and to the ecclesiastical law. We have said that the principle of the associations is un-Catholic; no small portion of Protestants would repudiate it as anti-Christian. Strange as it may seem to the ordinary Protestant, the Pope is to-day fighting with far better justification and far greater moderation the very war that Chalmers and the other founders of the Free Kirk waged in Scotland sixty years ago for the "Crown rights of Christ."

THE STORY OF A CONVERSION.

I was born and reared near a Catholic community and three miles from a Catholic church. I shall never forget my first visit to the Catholic church. My parents being strict Protestants, and much inclined to be prejudiced against the Catholic religion, the privilege of going to the church was seldom granted to us children. I was, as near as I can remember, ten years of age when I accompanied my elder brothers and sisters to witness the children make their first communion. I was so deeply impressed, young as I was, that I ever after felt a desire to know and to understand what it all meant, but no opportunity presented itself for a long time. Years rolled by, and I visited the church from time to time. A feeling of religious unrest always followed me, wearing off when a long period elapsed between the visits. My parents were very devoted to their own church, and very naturally sent us children to Sunday-school. Consequently I became schooled in the teachings of the Protestant church. But still, what I had seen of the Catholic religion kept me wandering and unsettled in my convictions. I remember asking my father once why there were so many different creeds, why, when Christ established the Church, it became so divided. Of course, the dear, good old soul answered me as a Protestant usually does answer that question. At one time books, written against the Catholic religion, were brought into our home. I was one of the first to begin the perusal of them, and I am not at all sorry to relate that I know I was the last. They were so corrupt and immoral that I soon decided our home had no place for them. I hid them, and my knowledge they were never found. I was then about fourteen or fifteen years of age. Some time after this I met a Catholic young man. We became warm friends, and as the old story goes, fell in love and we became engaged to marry. We did not stop to think of our difference in creed until the time arrived to think of marriage. Now, being brought up as I had been, coupled with the objections made by my people, caused me to hesitate. To become a Catholic merely for the sake of securing a husband I could not conscientiously do. After much serious thought, however, I finally decided to be baptized and married according to the rites of the Catholic Church. I had a hard battle to fight in gaining the consent of my parents, but they finally gave a reluctant consent when they saw how my heart was set on it, and realized that I did not wish to grieve them. They told me, however, that if I became a Catholic I would be disinherited, and would forfeit the affection of relatives and of friends. It was a hard test. My baptism took place, and shortly after I was married. I remember, after baptism, the good priest, taking my hand, asked me if I had sincere thought of becoming a Catholic, or if I had only been baptized to please my prosperous husband. I answered him honestly and unhesitatingly that it was not at all probable that I would have come to him for the rights of baptism if it were not that I wished to marry a Catholic young man; but furthermore, I added that I intended to make my religion a study, and if, after reading and being instructed, I could, with a clear conviction of its truth, become a Catholic, I would do so. He said to me: "That is right my child." After we were married we lived in a small town. There were quite a number of Catholics in and around the place. The same year we went to live there a little church was built and dedicated. When it was ready for worship there was no organist. I volunteered to act in that capacity gratis, providing they would accept me. They did gladly, and consequently we organized a little choir and were soon ready for work. And, although compared with the choir we listen to now in the cities, ours would sink into insignificance, we did right well, and we were as proud of our little service as we could be. Now this afforded me the opportunity of studying and learning more of the Church. We lived in this place three years, and during that time I continued to act as organist. I learned much during those three years. We left there, much to the regret of our friends, and went to the city. Here I began to study the Church in earnest. I first read "The Faith of Our Fathers." Afterward I went to our pastor, Father Ewing, of St. Peter's Church, Columbus. I took him into my confidence and asked him to help me. He manifested a kindly interest at once and furnished me with books on the Church. I went to him twice every week for instructions. After that it was plain sailing, and I soon became a Catholic in practice, as I had been in belief for many years. Looking back I can see the weight of the influences which led me into the Church. I trace them directly to my first memorable visit, and the impressions which I then received. Though my early days were spent in an atmosphere of strict Protestantism, where everything Catholic was tabooed, my thoughts would turn unconsciously to the little church, the line of devout First Communicants, and the simple but beautiful services. No one but a convert knows what a wrench it is to give up the religion and friends and customs of your childhood. It is sometimes made all the harder by the sentiment which obtains in some places against the Catholic Church, due, of course, to ignorance and prejudice. But one thing that helped me was the thought that after all I was but returning to the faith of our forefathers. My unceasing prayer is that God will give me grace sufficient to overcome all my trials—a faith that knows no bounds, and that I may be able to live that others will see and know that I have found the true way, and perhaps I may be the means of helping some one to find it.—The Missionary.

UNCLE SAM WILL STOP IT.

THE ENDLESS-CHAIN PRAYER IS AGAIN TO THE FORE. As apparently trivial mistakes sometimes make a strong corrective, so things of not much moment originally frequently take on important proportions. This is the case with the "endless chain prayer," so frequently denounced in these columns, to down which the postoffice authorities have had to take a hand. The matter and the great increase in circulation of the alleged prayer has been laid before Postoffice Inspector G. V. Craighoad of Pittsburg, and he is investigating. Mr. Craighoad, says the method is a clear violation of the postal laws. He said if the names of the senders were placed in his hands he would enter suits. The following letter from a Zaneville subscriber relating to the prayer has been received: "Enclosed you will find a prayer with certain conditions attached. Please inform me through the columns of your paper if this is another form of that 'endless chain' prayer, that so much has been said about in the different Catholic papers, and which I have seen condemned in your paper. It has just been sent to me, but as it is different from others I have seen I should like to have a little information regarding it." The enclosed prayer is as follows: "O Lord Jesus Christ, we implore Thee, eternal God, to have mercy on all mankind, purify us from all sin by Thy precious blood, and take us to be Thy true servants. Eternal Holiness, have mercy on all mankind, pardon all offences and deliver us from all threats, through Thy precious blood. Amen." Accompanying the prayer is another sheet which says: "This prayer has been sent out by the Bishop of Illinois, requesting it to be sent to all people. He says he who will not pray this prayer will be afflicted with a great misfortune; he who prays this prayer for nine days and will distribute it to nine people for nine days, starting on the day it is received, and only one day, will have great joy after nine days." Sometimes the prayer and its accompaniment vary a little, dire punishment being promised the mistake individual who refuses to send it on its way to nine persons. Church goes all over the country, Catholic and Protestant, have been receiving these prayers for many months, and in order to put a stop to the annoyance Uncle Sam will refuse to transmit them through the mails and will undertake to punish the promoters of this peculiar style of worship.

AN IRENICON FROM AN "ANGLO-CATHOLIC."

Dr. Wirgman, of the Church of England, in South Africa, has recently published a book entitled "The Blessed Virgin and All the Company of Heaven; Some Words for Peace." Coming at this time, such a book is full of significance, particularly inasmuch as it has been written in a very special way commended by Canon Knox Little. The book is an irenic, and it desires to extend the olive branch of peace and religious concord, particularly to the members of the Catholic Church. "Sirs, ye are brethren," are the words which express his mind and the mind which he desires to form in all whom he addresses. He attempts to answer the questions: Why should Christians remain divided? Is it impossible to explain our differences in a spirit of mutual forbearance? He would long that Canterbury, Constantinople, and Rome manifested the fulfillment of Our Blessed Lord's Prayer, "Ut omnes unum sint." He desires especially that Anglicans (or Anglo-Catholics, or whatever they would like us to call them) and "the rest of the Western Church" should set about understanding each other and removing every stumbling block in the way of union. Surely, all desires and prayers and efforts in that direction must be blessed by God. Canon Wirgman says most fairly that we ought not to accentuate our differences, or to use special pleading for the sake of proving our brethren in the wrong. And the particular purpose of his present volume is to set forth how much "the English Church" is in practical accord with the Primitive Church, in regard of belief and practice concerning the Blessed Virgin and to the Communion of Saints. He maintains that the English at the "Reformation" did not follow the same lines as the Protestants on the continent, and that, if any "doctrina Romanensium" came in for condemnation, mere abuses were aimed at, and not the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. In long and learned and edifying chapters Dr. Wirgman explains the Catholic and ancient doctrine concerning her whose greatness is unique, Mary Immaculate, Mother of God, the Second Eve, altogether sinless, ever the Blessed Virgin (virgo concipiens, virgo pariens virgo moriens), and the Mother of redeemed humanity. He explains, too, the Catholic doctrine with regard to "All the Company of Heaven"; in other words, the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. And he proceeds, step by step, to show how not only modern members of the Church of England, but Catholic divines, and even early "Reformers," have written what is quite in harmony with the Catholic doctrine. Dr. Wirgman's book reminds us inevitably of Tract 90, but what a difference between 1841 and 1906! No hasty Heads of Houses will now accuse one who writes in an anti-Protestant sense of "evading rather than explaining" the sense of the official teachings of the Established Church. Indeed, the views so ably upheld by Canon Wirgman are almost official at this day. No wonder that when Newman died his old friend, Dean Church, wrote of him as the founder of the Church of England as it now is. Various reflections arise from the perusal of Canon Wirgman's beautiful work. As Catholics we cannot but thank God for the amazing change that has come to pass even in our own life-

TEMPERANCE PREACHED IN A BAR-ROOM.

A CRUCIFIX, WITH EXHORTATION TO REMEMBER HOLY THIRST, IN GERMAN "TRINK-STUBE." Rev. Louis J. Nau, of Mt. St. Mary's Seminary, Cincinnati, who has been for some time in Jerusalem engaged in higher Biblical studies, is now in South Germany. The Catholic Telegraph prints a letter written by him to a friend from which the following edifying paragraph, describing the Catholicity of Bavaria, is quoted: "I am especially well pleased with the intense Catholicity manifested on every side. In Bruck, a town of about 7,000 inhabitants, nearly every house is decorated on the outside with statues or pictures of the Virgin or some other saints. In the hotel a large crucifix hangs on the wall opposite the head of the table. Even in the "Trink-Stube," or bar, there is a crucifix, and below it an exhortation not to overindulgence, but to be mindful of the sacred thirst of the dying Saviour. Though at home I would not like to see such decorations in hotels and bars, because of the danger of profligacy, here, where it is an expression of true piety, these signs of religion and devotion are most gratifying." In regard to religious conditions in France, Father Nau adds: "The 'Kulturkampf' was not carried on so energetically in Bavaria as in the northern countries, but yet the experience of their sister states has awakened here a more militant attachment and love for the Church. When will persecution at length awaken piety in happy France! Her legislators of today are so engrossed with the question of Church and State, and so blinded in their hatred of Catholicity that all economic reforms and commercial expansion are neglected. In consequence the influence which France formerly had in the Orient is rapidly waning. In Turkey, Syria and Palestine the Germans are slowly but surely crowding out France; and in Egypt, England has already completely crushed French influence. Twenty-five years ago France held the mastery in these countries."

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