

State of Catholicism throughout the World.

"Discourse pronounced at Rome at the opening of the Academy of the Catholic Religion in the year 1843, by the Cardinal Pacca, Dean of the Sacred Colloge, Bishop and Legate of Velletri, &c., &c.

"It is with true pleasure, illustrious academicians, that I am this year charged with opening the course of your wise dissertations. I am happy too in felicitating you on the literary labours you have undertaken for the defence of our holy Catholic religion. You have known how to unite the force of reasoning with the riches of learning, for the purpose of combating and destroying the lying and hateful accusations which heresy and schism have multiplied against the Sovereign Pontiffs, in representing as the tyrants and oppressors of nations those who have been the benefactors of humanity, the true authors of so many excellent Christian and civil institutions, of which strangers have daringly endeavoured to attribute the honour to themselves, as if it had been their proper work. Would that I were able, at the same time, to inspire your courage with a new ardour in this glorious and useful enterprise.

"We cannot dissemble. In different parts of Europe the Catholic religion is attacked either by open violence or by perfidious secrecy and dark machinations; but from the midst of this lowering and frightful horizon there break forth some luminous rays, the consubstantary fore-runners of a better and a happier future.

"I shall endeavour, then, to point out to you the end which your labours should have, to retrace before you the principal vicissitudes of the Catholic church in this age—to paint for you, together with the actual situation of this same Church, that of the dissenting sects, and to propose to you conjectures which we may form as to the future, conjectures which are inspired by the long residence I have had in different countries in Europe, and the numerous interviews which I have had with men, with *seigns*, with magistrates even attached to divers errors opposed to the Catholic faith, and, in fine, the experience gathered in a time so fruitful as our own in great events—these have followed each other so rapidly that in a few years we could flatter ourselves that we had lived more than a century.

"You will give to these considerations that degree of importance only which to you shall seem meet; for my part I shall apply to myself those words of the Prophet Joel—"Seniores vestri somnia somnabunt." c. ii., p. 11.

"When I arrived in Germany, in 1786, it might be said that the churches and the clergy of that country were at the top of human greatness. Two archiepiscopal sees, were occupied by a brother of the Emperor then reigning, and by a son of a King of Poland, Elector of Saxony. At the head of the other archiepiscopal and episcopal churches were placed prelates allied to the most ancient and illustrious families. Vast

portions of the soil of Germany, the most fruitful and the fairest, belonged to the clergy, with a right of temporal lordship which stretched over many millions of subjects. Great in the empire were the authority and the influence of the clergy. In the electoral college, of eight electoral members, three were ecclesiastics—the Archbishops of Mayence, of Trier, and of Cologne; the college of princes was presided over by the Archbishop of Salzburg, and all the bishops, as well as a great number of abbots, brought their votes into the diet. All this opulence, and splendour, and power, disappeared before the unjust domination and the rapacious sacrilege of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the clergy of Germany are now reduced to that state of dependence and of mediocrity in which nearly all the remainder of the Catholic clergy are placed.

"But shall we in this recognize an evil to the Church? I dare not say so. I consider that the bishops, deprived of temporal domain, which might be very useful for the sustenance of the ecclesiastical spiritual authority, when it was applied to that, and despoiled of a portion of their riches and power, will be more docile to the voice of the sovereign pontiff; and that we shall see none of them treading in the footsteps of the proud and the ambitious Patriarchs of Constantinople, nor pretending to an almost schismatical independence. Now also the Catholic population of all these extensive dioceses will be able to contemplate in the pastoral visitations the face of their own bishops, and the sheep shall at least occasionally hear the voice of their own pastor. In the nomination of canons and dignitaries, and of chapters of cathedrals, they shall have more regard, perhaps, to merit than to illustrious birth; it will no longer be necessary to brush the dust from the archives to establish, among other qualities of candidates, six quarters of nobility; and ecclesiastical titles shall be no more what they had been, surrounded with wealth; no more shall be witnessed what has been more than once beheld—the moment a high dignity or a rich benefice was vacant, nobles who up to that moment had no other post but one in the army, laying aside their uniforms and their military decorations, and all of a sudden invest themselves with the dignity of canons, and ornament with rich and brilliant mitres heads which but a few years before bore helmets. The grave ideas of the sanctuary did not always prevail over those of soldiery. We may then have henceforward less rich, it is true, but better instructed and more edifying pastors.

"With respect to the different sects which are found in Germany, the obstacles that opposed themselves to the return of their members to Catholicity are equally diminished. There are states and governments which as yet name themselves Protestant, but in which Protestantism no more exists. That which the apologists of the Catholic religion predicted in the sixteenth century has been fully accomplished—the principle of private judg-

ment triumphant, and each Protestant claiming for himself the right of explaining the sense of Scripture, by little and little, all the dogmas which at first preserved the pretended reform have disappeared, and it but remains for its adherents to fall into pure deism.

"At the commencement of my residence at Cologne, it happened one day that I was entertained by a Protestant diplomatist—a well-instructed man and distinguished writer; the conversation fell on the scientific journals which were then published in Germany. This diplomatist informed me that for some years there appeared in Berlin a catalogue entitled 'Bibliothèque Allemande Universelle' (the Universal Library of Germany,) and that in that they professed various reforms in matters of religion such as they expect from Protestantism. I desired to have the early volumes of this journal, and to apply myself to reading them. Behold, then, in a few words, what were these theological reforms. The inspiration of holy books, of the Divine scriptures, was rejected; they did not say a word of mysteries, very reasonably, because they did not admit them at all; there was no question whatever of a ministry and ecclesiastical hierarchy—in a word, in their pretended outline of evangelical religion, there was no trace at all of the Gospel. From that time a portion of the Protestant ministers—that is, the leading portion of the sects—have already fallen into similar errors; and many ministers have carried their incredulity so as to openly ridicule the most holy things.

"After the death of Frederick II. many Protestant ministers had no shame, in administering baptism to children, to substitute for the adorable name of the august Trinity the name of that unbelieving monarch who had just died. Since then secret societies and political revolutions struck the last blows at religious ideas, so that as I have already said, Protestantism no longer exists but in name. But this frightful abyss into which the heterodox sects have fallen, offers in my opinion, to very many Protestants a felicitous facility to return into the bosom of the Catholic Church. The heart of man cannot divest itself of religion; and when his intellect casts off the yoke of those errors which in his youth he had contracted, and when he finds himself of the principles of a false education with which he was imbued, it becomes easy for him to discover the light of the truth. The number of conversions daily taking place from heresy to Catholicity strongly bears out my opinion.

"But if we behold in Germany the rays of light and hope for the Catholic Church breaking even from the bosom of dark errors, France, in the vista, offers to our view an horizon still more consoling. From the first ages, the churches of Gaul distinguished themselves by a singular attachment and a filial devotion to the Chair of St. Peter; from that time also they fought with ardent zeal against every rising heresy. During a long succession of centuries we have seen this strict union perpetuated with the mother church of Rome; and these churches, these children devoted in

their fidelity, merit at our hands a glorious recital.

"From the sad and unhappy days of the sixteenth century, in which the sects of Luther, of Zuinglius, and of Calvin, made their escape from the gates of hell to inundate Europe, the Sorbonne, at the head of all the other universities, raised itself up all of a sudden to defend the pure and ancient doctrines of the Church with all the vivacity and ardour which characterise the French nation."

"All the world knows the generous efforts which were made by the churches of France in the following ages to beat down and overthrow the hydra of Jansenism; but in this age also, and precisely in the year 1682, the clouds began to eclipse in part the ancient splendour and glory of those churches. Nevertheless, this obscuration did not last a long time—it was soon dissipated—a terrible revolution broke out in the kingdom, bearing its frightful consequences in its train, and among others that which never fails—namely, persecution against the Church. Then the illustrious French clergy learned that which other countries do not to this day understand, that the Episcopal body and the clergy of a nation strongly bound and attached to the chair of St. Peter, form an impenetrable phalanx against all the attacks of a false policy and philosophic impiety leagued against it; it re-learned its ancient courage and filial devotion to the Holy See, and from that age till the present it has shown itself anew by its works, by its writings, by its zeal for the propagation of the faith, the most affectionate and the most submissive child of the holy Roman Church. It is true that this kingdom still cherishes many enemies of religion, and that its churches do not assuredly enjoy a perfect tranquillity—but could it be otherwise?"

"When the sea is violently chafed and angered, the agitation of the waves does not cease all of a sudden with the tempest, and it is but slowly and by degrees that the waters subside into their early calm. Religion and the churches behold themselves still attacked at every side by a crowd of enemies, and whilst the partisans of the irreligious doctrines of Voltaire and the philosophers of the eighteenth century endeavor to seduce every class by disseminating at a low price books infected with a blashless deism, we also witness biblical societies engaged in sowing with a profane hand altered and falsified texts of Scripture, and Protestants arming themselves with a new hardihood. To add to the disorder and the confusion, new enemies have appeared in the camp; these are the fashioners of a new religion, with their extravagant and sacrilegious system—the Saint Simonians, the Socialists, and the unhappy Chatelet, the proclaimer of a French church. Guilty writers have leagued themselves with these enemies from hell, with their impious and licentious novels, and even dramatic poets themselves have dated to put in play atrocious arts which harden the heart of man, bear the most hateful vices in triumph, and impudently reproduce on the theatre the sacred mysteries and the august ceremonies of the