

that they ought to rule in the councils and boards of the village and commune. They pay the taxes and if those in power will not think with them they must turn them out and put in those that will. In this way they seek to control municipal and communal elections, and, when they can, the parliamentary elections also. No expense is incurred in being a member of a Workmen's or Laborer's Catholic Club. The Church pays all outlay in connection with the keeping up of the institution, and even gives material assistance to its members. Perhaps it is not commonly known that the papacy has paid since 1870, and is paying to-day, the salaries of all those who hold official posts under its Government and were faithful to it during the war of Independence, just as if the Pope still reigned in the land. If the Papacy thus finances old traitors to Italy's king and constitution, it is not to be wondered at if it treats liberally nurseries of new ones! However it has its eye on recomping itself should anything happen to turn its partisans into patriots, for Catholic savings banks are being opened in connection with these clubs, and the priests are the bankers. In the present financial state of the banking interests in Italy this move of the Papacy is also meeting with success. By means, then, of uniting itself with disorder and disaffection wherever found, and by fomenting it whenever it can, and by the establishment of clubs which are nurseries of disloyalty and sedition, the priest is working to break up the unity and integrity of the kingdom of Italy, and to restore once again the Temporal Power.

In Italy no one, however, imagines that "the priest in politics" will succeed in his mission. Notwithstanding that he has been able to reassert his influence through socialistic clubs in some country districts, he is a despised and banned man throughout the Peninsula and he is utterly without authority. Priests are not received into society. A family opening its house-door to them would at once fall in public estimation and be counted not only disloyal but disreputable. A good son of the Church recently told me that he felt ashamed to be seen talking to a priest in the street. And no wonder for, as a priest in a lecture which I heard him deliver sometime ago said, "Now-a-days if a man takes off his hat to a priest in the public street every one looks askance at him, and he is considered a *birvante* (a low-fellow)." In Italy the Papacy is glad to recruit the ranks of its clergy from the children of the pauper and the criminal classes; and it has to make a bid even to win success in these quarters. It has to buy with money boys for its seminaries from parents of the lowest stamp. Naturally such a class of priests are not likely to have much social influence, especially as the meagre education they receive is not sufficient to raise them much above the level of their birth. Not long ago in a village in Umbria I saw the parish priest working as the common tinker of the place. He spends most of his time Sunday and Saturday making and mending pots and pans. I bought from him some specimens of his handiwork, and when afterwards I saw priests in better positions called by the very boys in the streets *prete del diavolo* (priests of the devil), because of their dissolute lives, I found not a little to respect in the clerical tinker. Then over and above the fact of the priest being without influence as a ruler, there exists in Italy a penal code to keep him in check. Mr. Froude in his "History of England" tells us that in the time of Henry VIII. there was in the country "a vindictive minority to whom the Papacy was dearer than their country, and whose persevering conspiracies taught England at no distant time to acquiesce with its whole heart in the wisdom which chained them down by penal laws as traitors and enemies to the commonwealth." Prompted by such wisdom the Government of Italy put into its penal code that became law as recently as June, 1888, certain clauses of this nature, "If any minister of religion by preaching, by writing, by conversation, or in the confessional, speaks against the King of Italy, or its unity, or disturbs the minds and consciences of the people, he shall render himself liable to fine; imprisonment, suspension or dismissal from his office." The law is not very strictly enforced, but from time to time, as in the case of the parish priest of Brescia, and in that of the parish priest of Cunco, both of whom were fined, imprisoned and debarred for a certain number of years from acting as priests in Italy, it is put in force. But the law exists to be carried out if required, and the dread of it checks, unless in exceptional circumstances as in those of Sicily, the traitorous spirit of the priests. Then the priests of Italy have been driven out of every sphere that touches directly the civil rights of the people. They are no longer teachers in the public schools. They have no voice in educational matters. Since the passing of the *opere pie* bill in 1889, the management of all charity monies has been taken out of their hands, and if a priest gets himself elected to a local

charity board the government steps in and cancels his election. Priests have no longer any contact with the students, with the soldiers, with the sailors of Italy, for all theological professorships in the universities have been abolished, and all chaplaincies in the army and navy. Also the Government, as its action in Sicily during the late riots proves, will not hesitate to adopt exceptional measures of repression to meet exceptional circumstances. The Papacy is playing a hazardous game. The Swedes had a game which I may call "How much steel can you take." Two men fought with knives, the blades of which were bared according to the amount of steel each combatant could take. The Papacy is at present putting its blade into the state, and watching to see how much steel it can take. The patience of the Government is well nigh exhausted. It will not always bear with its internal foes. It cannot always tolerate the "priest in politics." At present the "guarantees" hinder its dealing the Papacy its death-blow. But the House of Deputies, that passed these "guarantees" can also cancel them. The question of doing this is being seriously entertained and discussed. And when it comes, as come it will sooner or later, (if war broke out it could not be delayed a moment), then the aspirant to the Temporal Power with all his black legions, then the "priest in politics" would be cleared out of the land. It would be a case of bundling them off, as the Jesuits were bundled out of Venice in Fra Paolo Sarpi's day, not only "unwept, unhonored and unsung," but with a menacing crowd at their heels crying "*ande in malara, ande in malara*," (misfortune go with you, misfortune go with you). Then, one heart and one mind animating a constitutionally elected King and a loyal and attached people, Italy would be secure in her independence, unity and integrity, and be free to enter on a new career of material and intellectual, of moral and spiritual progress and prosperity.

P S—Since writing the above I have learned that Signor Crispi is preparing a decree to dissolve all the workmen's clerical societies in Venetia, because from the reports of the Prefects of Venice, Padua, Treviso, Belluno, and of other towns in the province he has found that they are inciting the peasants against the Government, the local authorities and against their landlords. He has also confiscated the clerical organ *Vita del Popolo*, published at Treviso, because it advocates disjunction from Italy, and alliance with Austria. This bears out what I have said about the priest in politics, and about the ability of the Italian Government to cope with him in every shape and form.

VENICE, November 15th, 1894.

"No One but the Good God."

When the Reformed Catholic Services were held in Masonic Temple it was not an uncommon occurrence to have them interrupted by remarks from persons in the audience. But the largest latitude was allowed, and by providential care and good management nothing but good resulted from these interruptions. On one occasion when Pastor O'Connor had preached on the Priesthood of Christ and the sufficiency of the sacrifice He had offered once for all men, and contrasted His work with that of Roman Catholic priests in their preposterous claims to be His sole agents in the work of salvation, he asked the Roman Catholics in the audience what they would do for salvation if Almighty God in His mysterious providence should in one moment call the Pope, cardinals and all the bishops and priests to receive their reward? The people now depend on these men for the salvation of their souls, for without the sacraments which they alone can administer there is no salvation for Roman Catholics, and if they should all be suddenly swept out of existence what would the people do? The question was repeated by the pastor, with the explanatory remark that he did not presume to judge what the reward of the Pope, bishops and priests would be, whether above or below. That was a subject which did not concern them, but it was of the greatest importance to every Roman Catholic to know what could be done in such an emergency. All things were possible with God, and if in the workings of His providence this calamity should befall the priests, what would the people do for salvation?

After a pause, an answer came from the body of the hall in the clear, shrill tones of an Irishwoman, "Oh, then, we'd have no one but the good God to go to." This was an interruption of the meeting that was welcomed by all present and greatly enjoyed by the Roman Catholics themselves. The good woman had solved the problem that had puzzled the Roman theologians for many centuries and that still holds so many minds in ignorance. When Roman Catholics know that they can go to the good God without asking permission of the Pope or his priests, or without depending on them for the blessings which He alone can bestow, they will turn away from those priests and come to the Saviour who will receive them with all the fullness of His love.—*Converted Catholic*