

mind. Some schoolboy notes on universal history reveal his intention of rising from facts to general principles, but he makes the wise reflection that to do this advantageously one must be first a supreme master of facts.

It was during the vacations of his college-life that Cortes met his Mephistopheles. Cortes, like Faust, longed "to scan the heights and depths of nature's mysteries." Don Manuel Jose Quintana, Cortes' evil angel, pledged himself to satisfy those longings. He placed in the hands of the young student the sceptical and revolutionary authors of the French Encyclopædia. Despite the antidote of a sound Christian home training, the poison of Diderot, d'Holbach, Rousseau and Voltaire did its work, and when Cortes accepted the professorship of Literature in the college of Caceres, he had freed his mind from the restraint of all authority, both human and divine. From 1828 to 1834 he lived an avowed sceptic, though holding a high place in public confidence as litterateur, journalist, and lecturer in Common Law at Madrid. Then the fury of social and political revolution broke upon Spain, and Cortes was a horrified but instructed spectator of its horrid sacrileges and barbarous cruelties. It was for him the first ray of kindly light; amid the encircling gloom it led him on, for in the same year he wrote:—"Without religion, society cannot exist; it is condemned to barrenness and death." This conclusion, however, he applied to society in the abstract; pride still ruled his will, and he would not admit that religion was a need for the individual. Personal liberty and human reason were his idols; in history he was the disciple of Guizot, in philosophy of Victor Cousin. The Church of his childhood he still admired, but only as a critic might admire the "Moses" of Michael Angelo or the "Apollo Belvidere"; he had yet to feel that fervent, doubt-destroying love born of belief. The great point, however, was that he had entered on the way; time alone was required for his logical mind to perceive the absurd contradictions of his position and to be drawn to the sublime harmonies of Catholicity.

In 1836 the Revolution reached its apogee in Spain, hideous disorder was

the nation's god. Cortes saw, as if by revelation, the cause and cure of all this turmoil. He staggered his whilom friends when, in the following year, he concluded his final lecture in the course of Common Law at Madrid by asserting the necessary supremacy of faith over reason. "How" he asked "do those demagogues propose to overcome the ideas of the Revolution? By human reason? Human reason must fail, if faith do not sustain it: it is irretrievably lost unless supported by the Divine Power." The rapidity of the change surprised even those most sanguine of his ultimate conversion. From Voltaire and Rousseau to Guizot and Cousin, and thence to Catholicity is a journey whose length and wearisomeness are compensated only by the glory of the final resting place. Some time later in a letter to Montalembert, Cortes writes:—"My conversion is due primarily to the mercy of God; after that, to my profound study of the Revolution. Revolutions are the beacon lights of Providence and of history. They strengthen our faith by intensifying its brilliancy." In 1838 Cortes entered the Spanish Parliament, an enthusiastic advocate of the most advanced claims of Catholicity. Here his genius had ample room for development, and here it was that he laid the foundation of his lasting fame.

It is worthy of note that Donoso Cortes, fired with the zeal of the convert who reaches truth, through the mazes of error, and enlisted in the noblest of causes—the triumph of Catholic principles in the guidance of the state—chose as his ideal lay apologist our illustrious fellow-countrymen, Daniel O'Connell. "O'Connell" he cries in a burst of admiration "is the single man in all the lapse of ages who can be called a people. Demosthenes was the greatest of all orators, but he was only a man. Cicero was an academician; Mirabeau, a faction; Berryer, a party. But O'Connell is a whole people, and a whole people is everything. There is not a man in the three kingdoms whose head reaches to the knee of this Irish Cyclops. He is sublime as Demosthenes, haughty as Mirabeau, melancholy as Chateaubriand, tender as Plutarch, crafty as Ulysses in the Grecian camp, daring as Ajax supplicating heaven for light to die in the noon-tide sun. He is at once a fox and a lion.