

turn our prayers for it in that direction. At the time when the priests were put to death or forced out of the country if they preached or said Mass, there was no other way open for conversion but the allowance or sanction of the Government. It was as natural, therefore, then to look for political intervention, to pray for the success of dynasties, of certain heirs or claimants to thrones, of parties, of popular insurrections, of foreign influence on behalf of Catholic England, as it would be preposterous and idle to do so now. *I think the best favor which Sovereigns, Parliaments, municipalities, and other political powers can do us is to let us alone.* Yet, though we cannot, as sensible men because times have changed, pray for the cause of the Catholic religion amongst us with the understanding and intention of those who went before us, still, besides what they teach us ethically as to perseverance and disappointment, I think we may draw two lessons from their mode of viewing the great duty of which I am speaking—lessons which we ought to lay to heart and from which we may gain direction for ourselves. And on this I will say a few words; and first, they suggest to us that in praying for the conversion of England we ought to have, as they had, something in view which may be thrown into shape of an object, present or immediate.

AN ABSTRACT IDEA OF CONVERSION—

a conversion which is to take place some day or other, without any conception of what it is to be and how it is to come about—is, to my mind, very unsatisfactory. I know, of course, that we must ever leave events to the Supreme Disposer of all things. I do not forget the noble lines,

"Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice."

But the great precept does not interfere with our duty of taking pains to understand what we pray for—what our prayer definitely means; for the question is not what we shall get, but for what we shall ask. The views of our predecessors were clear enough; on the other hand, a want of distinctness is not only unjust to our object, but it is very likely, very apt to irritate those for whom we pray, as if we had some secret expedients and methods against them, or else as if we were giving expression to a feeling of superiority and compassion for them, and thus betray ourselves to the resource alone left to men who have been beaten in argument. Certainly those who prayed for the accession of Mary Tudor or Mary Stuart to