

## CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION.

The following reply to the article in the *New York Independent* upon the subject of Catholic Higher Education appeared in the same journal dated March 1st. It is from the pen of Dr. Shahan of the Washington University:

The sombre view, which, in the *Independent* of Feb. 15, a Catholic expresses concerning the future of higher education in his Church, is likely to draw out some lively comment that may dispel the obscurity which reigns in his mind concerning the intellectual life and attitude of the Catholic Church.

I. The facts concerning the intellectual life in the Catholic Church.

This writer, utterly unknown to Catholics, says that "the great modern thinkers, from Locke to Emerson, have, everyone of them, been without the pale of Rome." This is categorical. We humbly submit in reply a short list of Catholic men within the "pale of Rome" who have done some thinking that the world has found good, and we ask the reader to draw his own conclusion.

(a) *In the Physical Sciences.* Among the chief astronomers of this age are the Catholics Secchi, Perry, Ferrari, Denza, Leverrier, Folie and Biot. There are no greater names in modern chemistry than those of J. B. Dumas and Chevreul, while in mathematics we may cite Cauchy, Gibbs, Tortolini and Hirn; in geology, De Barande, Elie de Beaumont, d'Omalus and Lapparent, in botany, the two Jussieus, in geography, the two d'Abbadies, in biology, St. George Mivart, Pasteur, Van Beneden and Fleurens; in anthropology, de Nadaillec.

(b) *In the Social Sciences.*—No name is more familiar than that of Le Play, to which may be added Bastia, Claudio Jannet and Perrin, while in the domain of criminology Catholics are justly proud of Thomissen. The modesty of Carlo Alibrandi prevented him from being much talked of in his lifetime, but just now the great exponent of the Roman law is proclaimed as the foremost of his time, and an "epoch-maker" in his treatment of the ancient legal texts.

(c) *In Philology and History.*—Our age is especially noted for its devotion to Oriental studies. The Catholic Church can boast of such men as Ignazio Guidi, Rubens Duval and Bickell, masters of Semitic languages; De Harlez and De Lacouperie, accomplished Chinese scholars; Ciasca, Peyron, Rossi, Eugene Revillout, the Coptic savants, Abbeloos and Coriani, skilled knowers of Syriac; the Jesuits of Beirut, whose efforts for Arabic literature are known to the European and Asiatic world, and to some few on this side of the water. De Rouge, the Schaiparelli and the Revillouts are Catholics, and we hold them as good Egyptologists as Europe can show. Among the Greek and Latin philologists I may quote Vahlen, of Berlin, and the Jesuit Fox, whose analysis of the Crown oration of Demosthenes is the best yet published, and in constant use in the German schools. "The nineteenth century," says Augustin Thierry, himself a convert to Catholicism, "will be marked among all the ages by its devotion to the study of history." Has the Church any reason to be ashamed of her children's record in this branch of human knowledge, which is supposed to be especially fatal to her claims? Just here I will only quote the works of foreign Catholics. The father of Christian archaeology is John Baptist de Rossi, the collaborator of all the great classical undertakings of the Academy of Berlin, and a polyhistor unsurpassed in this age. He works surrounded by a school which yields to none in Europe for scientific method, full discussion of sources and origins and abundant works.

The chief of all the great modern historical schools of Paris, Berlin, Vienna and Rome is the venerable Catholic Ecole des Chartes, at Paris, on whose plan all the others were founded. Where is there a more critical medievalist than the Dominican Donille, and who can surpass the Abbe Duchesne in the handling of the intricate and difficult texts of the early middle ages? Since the days of Mabillon and Montfaucon his like has not appeared in Europe. Potthast, the librarian of the Reichstag and editor of the most valuable medieval historical helps and collections, is a Catholic, as is Schaffer Boichorst, ordinary professor of medieval history in the University of Berlin, and an incomparable critic of early European annals. I do not speak of men like Hefele, Hergenrother and Doellinger in his Catholic days (when he did his best work), nor of Cantu and Janssen: they are inferior to none of their class for any of the qualities or graces of a historian. Our sombre Catholic friend need not be downcast, we will get our Catholic professors at Washington in the same way that the above mentioned writers and teachers grew up by hard study, application and observation of whatever is good in the teaching world. And there is nothing in the Church to prevent us from saying with St. Augustine: "Quid isti et ista cur non ego." I will add that men of genius, the summities of the academic profession, are no more the special product of any religion than they are of any century or any philosophy. A university may be very well conducted and furnish the very best results if it has well trained, painstaking professors and instructors, and provides for the observance of the most approved methods in the pursuance of the studies of the curriculum.

I have cited above only the names of quite modern Catholic scientists, and of them only those who recur to my mind at once. But the Catholic Church has a long list of celebrities in every department of human thought. In every century, until the rise of Protestantism, the greatest of the world's intellectual glories were her children, experiencing no restraint and recognizing no incompatibility between their religious belief and their intellectual development. The great Fathers of the Church are hers, the great missionaries of the pagan world, the great builders of cathedrals and majestic abbeys, the great artists in stone and metal, the divine Raphael and Michael Angelo, the inspired singers of the sweetest and most sublime strains. The great poets are hers, the builders of the medieval epics with Dante at their head; and if Shakespeare was not a Catholic, his plays mirror Catholic life and thought, while it would be difficult to say how much of the glorious coloring of his work is the result of his readings and impressions in a period when England was yet, confessedly, largely Catholic. The Catholic Church did not destroy classic learning, but tenderly picked up the torn leaves of the old books from beneath the feet of the barbarian war-horses; she did not wreck the treasures of art nor call the schools of antiquity "dens of robbers, temples of Moloch, synagogues of perdition," as Luther styled the great Christian universities. These universities themselves grow up under ecclesiastical influences. One must be very ignorant to think that Oxford and Cambridge and Vienna owe nothing to the Catholic Church. Their statutes, their libraries, their funds, their traditions, their very cosmopolitan influence are Catholic. *Res clamat domino.*

## II. The question of principle.

We are told that it is impossible to succeed at Washington because of the Damocles sword of Papal censure which is ever hanging over our heads, threatening us into despairing silence

or driving us out from all religious belief. If a man tells me I cannot walk, I say, "Sollicitur ambulando." And so, I answer that the Catholic Church has been for centuries a teacher of the human race, that she has not only tolerated, but built up and protected all the great old universities of Europe (we are tired of repeating the splendid list), that Rome is ever anxious to open new universities and further their interests. The University of Washington has some enemies, yet from Rome this dangerous thinking establishment has so far experienced only sympathy and protection. The Catholic Church never interlopes with the methods, principles or legitimate conclusions of any science. But she holds a deposit of divine revelation, a code written by the Holy Ghost, the very truth, and entrusted to her undying and divinely protected infallible consciousness. She must, by her very nature and mission condemn whatever is opposed to those truths of which she is the depository, and which, on the assurance of God, cannot be opposed to any other real truth. But in thus acting she does not deprive human liberty of any right. The conclusions of one natural science cannot contradict those of another there can be only an apparent antilogy.

And so it is with the ecclesiastical condemnations of certain propositions. These condemnations do not always affect the doctrine of a proposition or a teaching. Sometimes they are only an exercise of the Church authority for disciplinary or prudential reasons. Even when they aim at the doctrine, there are many gradations in the notes of censure applicable to it. Nor are such condemnations issued hastily or without grave reasons. The decisions of the Roman ecclesiastical commissions, as such, are not infallible. One may believe that a Congregation might have acted with more circumspection, allowed a larger freedom, sought more information, while loyally exercising its authority and obeying. But when the Church formally condemns a doctrine, there can only be the appearance of truth about it; further study, fresher discoveries being likely to justify the action of the ecclesiastical authority. Moreover, this principle is not peculiar to the Catholic Church; it is that by which all Christian orthodox sects justify the condemnations of the heresies of Arius, Nestorius and Eutyches. They differ from the Church only in the extent and actuality of its application.

I might quote here the conduct of the early reformers, the well-known action and principles of Luther and Calvin anent any form of Christianity different from their own. If we trusted our despairing Catholic friend we would believe that Catholicism had a monopoly of the persecution of men of science. But let him peruse the works of Draper and Lecky, let him recall the history of Kepler, of the introduction of the Gregorian Calendar, of the sufferings of the Catholic Marquis of Worcester, the reputed inventor of the steam engine, of inoculation for smallpox, and of quinine, he will learn that Catholic theologians are not alone to blame for what the so-called martyrs of science have had to endure.

It is not so long ago that from non-Catholic pulpits geology was denounced as "a dark art" and no subject of lawful inquiry, while Cardinal Wiseman won the approbation of Sir Charles Lyell for his liberal and correct views on the subject. As a matter of fact, every positive religion, in which there yet exists firm faith in its principles, of a necessity bars out all conclusions opposed to them. Else why the Briggs and Smith trials for heresy? Why the condemnation of the Bishop of Lincoln by the Archbishop of Canterbury? We may differ

as to the manner of applying this innate authority, as to the extent of the punishment and the choice of victims, but as far as the principle is concerned nothing can be urged against the Catholic Church that does not rebound upon the orthodox Christian sects and upon Christianity, which if left helpless to defend itself, would soon become a mere law of life, or a fresh philosophy on the long catalogue of human aberrations.

## III. The Catholic Church and the English language.

It is true that Catholics consider that for three centuries the English language has been used as a weapon against them. But does anybody imagine that the Catholic clergy and people had nothing to do with the original making of the English language, that the genius of Chaucer is not as much to the credit of the Catholic Church as that of Hooker or Jeremy Taylor to the credit of the Church of England? On this subject we would recommend to our Catholic friend the works of Mr. Stopford Brooke and Mr. Morley on "Early English Literature," or the solid little volume of Brother Azarias "On the Development of Early English Thought." English literature owes much to Protestant writers; but it was a great and plastic instrument of speech long before the accident of the Reformation, and all the odors of the Catholic sanctuary and fireside have not yet died out of it. The splendid efflorescence of English literature in the sixteenth century was only the natural outcome of a movement whose origins lay far back of the Reformation, and in which the Catholic clergy had its proper share, as may be seen by the munificent labors of Cardinal Wolsey, who rivalled in England his Spanish contemporary Ximenes.

The Catholic Church points with pride to the names of Manning, Newman and Brownson as representatives of general English literature, whose best work was done after entering the Church; to her poets, such as Moore, Faber, Aubrey De Vere, Coventry Patmore, Adelaide Proctor, R. D. Joyce, Boyle O'Reilly, Denis Florence MacCarthy, D'Aroy McTee, Mangan, Callanan and others. The Catholic Celt had infused into the English verse no small element of its ringing lyricism, its tender, plaintive melancholy, its rare, keen sense of color, its passion for the glories of nature. He gave it that pity and mild sweetness in which it was naturally wanting; he taught it tricks of rhyme and jingle odd, startling contrasts of expression; he decked out in a Christian garb the lusty pagan youngster, and watched over his now-forgotten youth until he was able to look out for himself—all of which can be seen in Matthew Arnold's Essay on Celtic Literature. Has our friend ever heard of Gerald Griffin, the Banims, and Carleton—true wizards of romance; or does he not know that it is the element of Catholic medieval life which makes so splendid and attractive the deathless literature of Scott's novels?

Two Roman Cardinals of English tongue have left romances that will endure as pure, sweet English as long as the language is spoken by the multitudinous races which now own it, and whose various influences upon its formation it will be one day hard to decipher. We need not be ashamed of the oratory of O'Connell, who freed a whole people by the witchery of his tongue, nor of the golden eloquence of Shiel, that modern Sedulus, the Gibbon of parliamentarians, for richness of imagery and gorgeous pomp of diction. In English history we believe that the names of Lingard, O'Connor, Lanigan, Bridgett, Bishop, Gasquet, Marshall, Moran, Brady, O'Hanlon, Malone, Healy and many other Catholics would soon be missed from any biography on the subject; while Celtic philology has yet to find