

THE MILITANT ATTITUDE OF THE FRENCH CLERGY.

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THE militant attitude of the Roman Catholic clergy of France from the very outset of the Dreyfus agitation may be followed by far-reaching consequences. Not since the clerical encroachments which led to the *coup de etat* of May 16, 1877, have the French clergy taken such violent part in active politics. It will be remembered that the "Seize Mai" drove even Liberal Republicans into a persecuting mood that led to the laicizing programmes of Paul Bert and Jules Ferry, resulting in the dispersal of the religious congregations in 1880. It was then that Gambetta, as President of the Chamber, denounced clericalism as the enemy, and thereby consolidated the strength of the republic and made it impregnable. Are reprisals more drastic than those that followed the clerical conspiracy of the "Seize Mai" about to be repeated?

M. Jonnart, the influential Deputy from the Pas du Calais, a Moderate Conservative Republican and a Liberal Catholic, who occupied the portfolio of Minister of Public Works in the Casimir-Perier Ministry in 1893, has written a remarkable letter to M. Cornely, in which he points out that the Dreyfus affair has been utilized by the Clericals and monarchists solely as a pretext for making a desperate onslaught on the republic and upon all liberal institutions and ideas. M. Jonnart's words are indorsed by the *Figaro*, the *Temps*, the *Matin*, the *Siecle*, the *Aurore*, and by all the newspapers that had the courage or honesty to espouse the cause of truth and justice. Clear-headed conservative Catholics like M. Hebrard, the Editor of the *Temps*; M. De Rodays, Editor of the *Figaro*; M. Cornely and M. Jonnart, do not hesitate to declare that the open hostility of the French clergy towards the republic is such that they fear not only that there will be anti-clerical reprisals, but when these reprisals once begin they will become so vindictive that no one can say where they will end. The Radical and Socialist press already demands the expulsion of the Jesuits and all the religious congregations. The clericals utterly ignore the encyclical which Leo XIII recently addressed to the French bishops enjoining them in mild academic language to use their influence to restrain the partisan zeal of the lower clergy. This encyclical is very different from the forcible one of February 16, 1892, in which the Pope so clearly indicated to French Catholics that it was their bounden duty to accept the republic as the firmly established form of government. Both of these Papal admonitions are unheeded, and the clerical organs, more violent than ever, insist that in order to be a good Catholic one must first of all be an "anti-Dreyfusard."

The trend of opinion is that an uncompromising issue is being framed between the Gallican clergy and the republic. A glance at the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church in France during the Dreyfus agitation may be of interest in view of coming events. During the last five years the religious