

THE OWL.

Vol. V.

OTTAWA UNIVERSITY, OCTOBER, 1891.

No. 2

A PROPHET OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.*



MOST Rev. John Ireland, the great Archbishop of St. Paul, dismissed the enthusiastic delegates to the recent American Catholic Congress with the declaration that there was a mission open to laymen, that the time had come when clergy and laity must rise up as one man and devote their united efforts to the advancement of Catholic truth. He struck the keynote of the Catholic position in America when he declared for lay action in the Church, for, humanly speaking, the salvation of Catholicity, and, absolutely speaking, its complete triumph, depend upon our speedy return to the customs of Apostolic ages, when lay missionaries, docile disciples of Jesus Christ, "by their apologies, their discourses in the Senate, their social, political and religious influence generally," exerted so mighty a power in the overthrow of paganism and the conversion of the barbarians. Had Archbishop Ireland proposed a half-dozen fitting guides for Catholic laymen he could scarcely have omitted the name of the subject of this sketch—John Donoso Cortes.

The transition period from the professed materialism and gross sensualism of the 18th century to the rational spiritualism of the 19th gave us three great men—Joseph de Maistre, James Balmes and Donoso Cortes; the first a Frenchman, whose writings have instructed and delighted many, though still too few; the two others, Spaniards, of whom compara-

tively little is known. No other Christian nation, save perhaps Ireland, has received such scant justice from the world as Spain. It has been a land of eminent saintliness and sublimest genius, but its saints are in large part uncanonized and its geniuses occupy only a small niche in the Temple of Fame. To the vast majority of even educated men, Saavedra, Calderon, Louis of Granada, Balmes and Donoso Cortes are as unknown as the illustrious Pipsihhi or as dead as the immortal Xixosou.

Donoso Cortes was born in 1809 at the village of Valla-de-la Serena, Estramadura, Spain, whither his parents had gone in their flight from the victorious French invaders. His mother was his earliest teacher; at five years of age he entered a secondary school; at eleven he had finished the Humanities; he then studied law at the universities of Salamanca and Seville, and the latter institution made him a licentiate in law in his sixteenth year. At nineteen he was called to fill the chair of Literature in the college of Caceres. So far his career had been brilliant, and amply justified the laconic compliment which his wonderful energy and intense love of study drew from his earliest masters—"Donoso is a diamond." From the beginning he had shown a decided distaste for the analytic and deductive sciences; but history charmed him, philosophy fascinated him. He combined them both, subjected his historical facts to the guidance of philosophical principles and obtained an harmonious view of the whole. His was essentially a synthetic

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