

He read of a new religious body, who had rejected the doctrine of the infallibility of the pope, and who styled themselves the "Old Catholics." They were regarded with favor by the government of Germany, which had already suppressed Catholic journals in Lorraine and Alsace, because they had protested against any injury being done to Catholic interests.

One day he requested his son Charles to accompany him to Tivoli, a place of resort which was regularly frequented by German officers.

"To Tivoli, father?" asked his son, in astonishment. "You forget that the Germans meet there every afternoon."

"For that very reason I wish to go," replied Count Rethel. "I desire to learn with certainty something of the highest importance."

Arrived at Tivoli, they sat down before a table in the garden where several German officers were holding a spirited discussion. The old count, who spoke German perfectly, took part in the conversation, but he prudently concealed his real sentiments and soon introduced the subject of the new German Empire, as opposed to the Catholic Church.

"There is no question of the fact," asserted a colonel, "that in high government circles it has been proposed to establish a new German National Church. The pernicious influence of Rome must be crushed."

"I agree with you!" replied a major. "Romanism has been the curse of Germany. In the Middle Ages, the German emperors were constantly waging war against despotic popes. In the new empire, these disputes will be stopped simply by Germany renouncing Rome."

"How can this be possible?" asked the count, in surprise. "In Germany there are many millions of Catholics; will they allow themselves to be separated from the head of their Church?"

"The Catholics must obey," sternly answered the colonel. "A strong government can do everything, and the German Empire is strong enough to establish a Church, and I hope that it will do so."

"Count Bismarck is a far-seeing, prudent statesman," said the count laughingly. "In all combats with the Catholic Church the most powerful rulers have been defeated, without exception, for the last eighteen hundred years. Bismarck will not commit such a grievous political error as to war against the Church."