

primates. The clergy were exempted from all civil jurisdiction; and Gratian the monk, by his decretals, completed the mischief occasioned by the decretals. The clergy employed themselves in augmenting their income by every possible mode. The possession of their estates was declared immutable and sacred. Men were terrified with temporal as well as spiritual threats. Tithes were exacted. A traffic was made of relics; and pilgrimages were encouraged. This completed the destruction of morality, and the last stroke was thus given to the discipline of the church. A criminal life was expiated by a wandering one. Events were constructed into the judgments of God; and decisions by water, by fire, or by the destiny of the saints, were adopted. The folly of judiciary astrology was added to superstitious opinions. Such was the state of the western church: an absolute despotism, with all its atrocious characters.

The eastern church experienced also its calamities. The Grecian empire had been dismembered by the Arabian mussulmen, by modern Scythians, by the Bulgarians and the Russians. These last were not amended by being washed with the waters of baptism. Mohammedism deprived Christianity of part of its followers, and threw the rest into slavery. In the west, the barbarians, converted to Christianity, had carried their manners along with them into the church. In the east, the Greeks had become depraved by their commercial intercourse with a race of men perfectly similar. Nevertheless, literature seemed to revive under the learned and vicious Photius. While the clergy of the east were striving against ignorance, our clergy in the west became hunters and warriors, and were possessed of lordships subject to military service. Bishops and monks marched under standards, massacred, and were massacred. The privileges of their domains had engaged them in public affairs.—They wandered about with the ambulatory courts; they assisted at the national assemblies, which were become parliaments and councils; and this was the period of entire confusion between the two powers. Then it was that the bishops pretended openly to be the judges of sovereigns; that Vamba was compelled to do penance, invested with a monk's habit, and deposed; that the right of reigning was contested to Lewis the debonair; that the popes interested in the quarrels between nations, not as mediators, but as despots; that Adrian II. forbade Charles the bald to invade the states of his nephew Clotaire; and that Gregory IX. wrote to St. Louis in these terms: 'We have condemned Frederick II., who called himself emperor, and have deposed him; and we have elected in his stead Count Robert your brother.'

But if the clergy encroached upon the rights of the temporal power, the lay lords appointed and installed priests, without the participation of the bishops; regular benefices were given to seculars, and the convents were pillaged. Neither incontinence nor simony excited any shame.—Bishops were sold; abbeys purchased; priests had either a wife or a concubine; the public temples were forsaken; and this disorder brought on the abuse and contempt of censures, which were poured forth against kings, and against their subjects; and torrents of blood were shed in all countries. The church and the empire were then in a state of anarchy. Pilgrimages were preludes to the crusades, or the expiation for crimes and assassinations. Ecclesiastics of all orders, believers of all ranks, enlisted themselves. Persons loaded with debts were dispensed from paying them; malefactors escaped the pursuit of the laws; corrupt monks broke through the restraints of the solitude; dissolute husbands forsook their wives. Courtizans exercised their infamous trade at the foot of the sepulchre of their god, and near to the tent of their sovereign. But it was impossible to carry on this expellition, and the succeeding ones, without funds. An impost was levied, and this gave rise to the claims of the pope upon all the estates of the church; to the institution of a multitude of military orders; to the alternative given to the vanquished, of slavery, or of embracing Christianity, of death, or of baptism; and to console the reader for so many calamities, this circumstance occasioned the increase of navigation and commerce, which enriched Venice, Genoa, Pisa, and Florence; the decline of the feudal government, by the disorder in the for-

tunes of the noblemen, and the habit of the sea, which, perhaps, paved the way from afar for the discovery of the New World. But I have not the courage to pursue any further the account of the disorders, and of the exorbitant increase of papal authority. Under Innocent III. there was no more than one tribunal in the world, and that was at Rome; there was but one master, and he was at Rome, from whence he reigned over Europe by his legates. The ecclesiastical hierarchy extended itself one step further, by the creation of cardinals. Nothing was now wanting to the despot but janizaries, whom he acquired by creating a multitude of monastic orders. Rome, formerly the mistress of the world by arms, became so by opinion. But why did the popes, who were all-powerful over the minds of men, forget to maintain the terrors of the spiritual thunder, by directing it only against ambition or unjust sovereigns? Who knows whether this kind of tribunal, so much wished for, to which crowned heads might be summoned, would not have existed to this day in Rome; and whether the threats of one common father, supported by general superstition, might not have put an end to every military contest?

The papal militia, composed of monks, who were laborious and austere in their origin, became corrupted. The bishops, tired out with enterprises of the legates, of the secular magistrates, and of the monks, over their jurisdiction, encroached, on their parts, upon the secular jurisdiction, with a degree of boldness of which it is difficult to form an idea. If the clergy could have determined to erect gibbets, perhaps we should be under a government entirely sacerdotal. It is the maxim, that 'the church abhors the effusion of blood,' which has preserved us from it. There were schools in France and in Italy; and those at Paris were famous towards the eleventh century. The number of colleges was increased; and, nevertheless, this state of the church, which we have described without malice or exaggeration, was continued in all Christian countries, from the ninth to the fourteenth century, an interval of four or five hundred years. The emperors have lost Italy, and the popes have acquired a great temporal power. No one hath yet raised himself against their spiritual power. The interests of this sovereign are embraced by all the Italians. The dignity of episcopacy is eclipsed by that of cardinal, and the secular clergy were always ruled by the regular clergy. Venice alone hath known and defended its rights. The irruption of the Moors in Spain hath thrown Christianity there into an abject state, from which it hath scarce emerged for these two last centuries; and even down to our days, the inquisition displays it under the most hideous aspect:—the inquisition, a terrible tribunal, a tribunal insulting the spirit of Jesus Christ; a tribunal, which ought to be detested by sovereigns, by bishops, by magistrates, and by subjects: by sovereigns, whom it ventures to threaten, and whom it hath sometimes cruelly persecuted; by bishops, whose jurisdiction it annihilates; by the magistrates, whose legitimate authority it usurps; by the subjects, whom it keeps in continual terror, whom it reduces to silence, and condemns to stupidity, from the danger that attends their requiring instruction, their reading, their writing, and their speaking; a tribunal with bath only owed its institution, and which only owes its continuance in those regions where it is still maintained, to a sacrilegious policy, jealous of perpetuating prejudices and prerogatives, which could not have been discussed, without being dispelled.

THE FAMILY CIRCLE.

GOD THE WIDOW'S GOD.

A REAL INCIDENT.

It was the twilight of a November evening. In chill weariness Mrs M— drew her chair to the fireplace, in a room which served as 'parlour, kitchen, and hall;' and as she rested her weary frame for a few moments, her eye fell upon her little fatherless children, who, in subdued playfulness, were building their castles and bridges of blocks by the light of the flickering blaze of the fire.

It was near 'thanksgiving,'—the first after her widowhood. She had felt an irrepressible desire that her little ones might miss no comfort that day

which the tenderness of their father had ever led him, even in poverty, to supply.

As she looked upon her children, her thoughts went back unconsciously to the past—to the days of early marriage—of comparative affluence and ease—when, her husband's worth and standing acknowledged by all, they looked forward to much earthly good for themselves and rising family. Then came failure, in mercantile business—decline—poverty. Of the causes which led to this, the deep devoted love of woman led her lip and her heart alike to be silent. Lower and lower in the valley had they gone down, and upon his death, to exertions by the needle she had added more laborious tasks, that she might keep her little ones together, and bring them up in that 'nurture and admonition,' and in those principles which now was the only portion she could bestow.

She knew too well the value of His blessing who has promised to be a father to the fatherless, not to desire it as the first portion for herself and her offspring. Next to this she desired for them a good education. By self-denial in other things, and the kind consideration of the teachers in the seminary and academy, she had been able to give her two oldest advantages equal to other children of their age. And they met her wishes; they were good children. The youngest had an almost incurable inflammation of the eyes, which caused Mrs. M. many a solicitude. It was this little sufferer her children were seeking to amuse with their mimic buildings.

This day Mrs. M. had been washing. That delicate frame, so unused in early life to menial employments, shrunk not from hardships when her heavenly Father hedged up other ways of maintenance. Lower and lower as she had descended in the valley of humiliation, no murmur arose in her heart. So she could preserve her Christian integrity, and eat the bread of honest independence, however coarse; so she could obey the injunction, 'owe no man anything, but to love one another,' she was thankful and happy.

As she sat Mrs. M. turned over and over in her mind the earnings of the week, and her debts to others. There was her week's rent to be met, and her weekly which was an indispensable comfort, yet to be purchased, with other minor things; and her earnings would but satisfy for the payment of these. She felt the disappointment of not gratifying her children, but never had she suffered her rent to pass one week unpaid—nor could she now. 'It would be tempting Providence,' said she to herself, 'and if I should sicken or again have to take my poor half blind child to the doctor, could I answer it? No—I will deny myself and trust God's providence.—He will provide.' In her heart's agony, she sighed aloud when she repeated, 'God will provide!'

The sigh, the words, caught the ear of the children. They left their play, and ran to their mother. 'Why do you cry, mother?' said they, on seeing her eyes wet with tears, 'and what do you mean by saying God will provide?' Taking the youngest in her lap, and throwing an arm round each of the others, she told them the story of Abraham's trial of faith. She dwelt upon the faithfulness of God to his believing children until she had lost sight of her own immediate trials, and her heart was filled with love and trust.

She was interrupted. There was a knock at the door. 'Mr. Fanning has sent you these chickens and these things for thanksgiving.—Good night.' The basket contained every needed supply.

'My children,' said the widow, with an overflowing heart, 'see in this the faithfulness of our Father in heaven. Let us kneel and thank him for his mercies. I had not wherewith to buy you a dinner. Truly, He will provide.' And she knelt and poured out her heart in love and gratitude to her faithful covenant-keeping God.

And did she forget to crave blessings upon him, who under God, had relieved her wants? What light and joy had that almoner of heavenly bounty kindled in that lone dwelling. Happy the man who has the blessing of the widow and the widow's God.

It was again a November evening. A lady rapped at the widow's door.

'I wish to pay you my little bill,' said she to Mrs. M. 'Desiring to give a little treat to the