

Religious Crisis in France

(Continued from last issue.)

VI.

Before I conclude, now that I have finished my statement of the facts, I must throw a last glance on the ideas which engendered them, and which in all probability—for so fatal and so sweeping is their influence—will entail still graver consequences in a country, such as mine, where the logic of conceptions is so terribly powerful. One can already foresee that the reasoning process which provided the pretended justification for denying the right to teach to members of the Congregations, on the ground that they had pronounced vows of obedience and of chastity, will be applied in all its sophistical force to all members of the Catholic clergy who submit to their superiors and are vowed to celibacy; and as a matter of fact a proposal to forbid them to teach has already been laid before Parliament.

The Jacobin notion goes much further still. It propounds the theory that the viceroy fact of obedience to the Pope in all matters which concern religious doctrine and discipline subjects all ecclesiastics to a sort of diminutive capitulation, which renders them incompetent, in a country which is officially withdrawn from the operation of any form of religious authority—where the human law declares itself to be independent of the divine—to exercise any social function whatsoever, such, for example, as the bringing up of the young. It obviously follows that the same incapacity is attributable to all citizens without distinction who profess the Catholic faith which involves, no less than in the case of the priests and members of the religious orders, submission to the head of their Church in all matters which concern the faith. Assuredly such a conception seems monstrous, at the beginning of the twentieth century, to all countries in which the modern principles of liberty of conscience and of worship are recognized as constituting the very foundation of the Commonwealth, and more especially in a state in which the vast majority of the citizens belong to the Catholic faith. Nevertheless, it is in conformity with the political traditions of the French Republic, and it reappears to-day as the natural result of a process of evolution backwards, in the minds of those who strive to resuscitate those conditions.

One of the leaders of the Parliamentary majority, a Senator who has long held and still holds a position of considerable influence in the French Legislature—M. Clemenceau—expounded, also in the pages of the National Review, the theory which he has often maintained of the incompatibility of the principles and the doctrines of the Catholic Church with the life and the development of contemporary civil society. He tried to establish his theory on the basis of historical considerations arising from the part played by the Papacy throughout the ages, and of the effects which, in his eyes, the dogmatic definitions of the Roman Pontiffs and of the Councils are liable to have in the political world. The discussion of a thesis of such magnitude would extend this article beyond all proper proportions, and I will only remark that if it were well founded it would be so in other countries just as much as in France; but from an examination of the political situation in the principal states of Europe that does not appear to be the case.

Belgium, for example, offers the spectacle of a nation which for more than twenty years has been governed by majorities animated by the same sentiments as their leaders, and not only is it impossible to affirm that liberty has suffered thereby, but on the contrary it is an indisputable fact that the liberty of the press, of opinions, and of discussion, parliamentary and otherwise, (to speak more especially of the subject in hand) the right to teach, and more unrestricted in that country than in many others; and in no state are social legislation and active democratic organization more developed.

The German Empire, under the impulsion of Prince Bismarck, engaged during the first years of its existence in a memorable struggle with the Catholic Church, not unlike that which was undertaken in France by the Ministers of the Third Republic. Not only did that struggle come to an end when Prince Bismarck had to appeal to the Catholics for their assistance against the Socialists, but the aspect of the situation has entirely changed since the accession of William II. A considerable degree of liberty has been restored to the Catholic Church, the sovereign seeks for every possible opportunity to manifest toward his sentiments of respect and of sympathy, and, far from considering it as a force which is fraught with danger to the Empire, treats its representatives and its adherents as valuable allies.

Facts, therefore, in the most eloquent and decisive manner refute a theory which is based upon historical reminiscences interpreted with passionate partiality, wholly inapplicable to the conditions of contemporary society, and serving only to resuscitate the disputes of the past; or which is founded upon doctrinal dissertations the meaning of which has been insufficiently studied, and wherein the most essential distinctions, to which the Church itself has continually drawn attention, are entirely neglected.

But, as I have proved by an historical statement which appears to me to be far stronger than all the "theoretical" discussions of my opponents, it is not merely against the Catholic Church and its doctrines that the "lay" movement, as it is called in our country, is directed, but against Christianity itself. In vain do certain minds, by reason of the direction imparted to them in early years by their French Protestant education, from the influence of which they have, by the way, emancipated themselves, attempt to connect the maintenance of impossible distinctions and strive thereby to justify their conceptions in the eyes of neighboring nations in general and of England in particular.

In reality the term "anti-Christian" is not strong enough; for the attack is in fact directed against the very idea of religion. An important member of the present Ministerial majority, who intervened with decisive effect in the Senate in connection with the abrogation of the last guarantees of scholastic liberty, said two years ago: "The triumph of the Galilean has lasted for twenty centuries; it is now his turn to die. The mysterious voice which once in the mountains of Ephesus announced the death of Pan, to-day announces the end of that false God who promised an era of justice and peace to those who should believe in him. The deception has lasted long enough; the lying God, in his turn, disappears." The politician who spoke in these terms—M. Delpech—adds to the authority which his parliamentary position gives him that conferred by the lofty functions which he exercises in the realm of Freemasonry. I doubt if the true meaning of this fact is quite understood by my readers, who are accustomed, as far as I can judge, to look upon Freemasonry as a charitable and harmless institution. France was the victim of that illusion at the end of the eighteenth century, and has had only too good reasons for curing herself of it. To-day all anti-Christian legislation, all hostile measures directed against the Catholics, are prepared and forced on the country by the Masonic body, which has all the force of a political caucus. It was at Masonic assemblies more than elsewhere that all laws directed against educational liberty were, and still are, elaborated, preparatory to their being dictated to the Ministers and submitted to Parliament.

Well-informed writers have often noted traces of the same inspiration in the history of the Revolution. Thus, from every point of view, the present crisis brings before our eyes the tradition of that decisive epoch, and at the same time makes manifest the strange contradiction existing between the principles of liberty in the realm of politics proclaimed in 1789 and the intellectual despotism in the realm of philosophy inaugurated by the hatred of Christianity, which dates from the same period. The existence of that contradiction is freshly affirmed in our own day by the pretension which the modern Jacobins try to force down our throats; by the attempt made, as in times past, under cover of the catchwords supplied by the principle of the essential unity of the State, to establish a certain doctrine which is incompatible with the very idea of liberty of conscience. M. Clemenceau has tried, no doubt, to save the principle of liberty from the inevitable consequences of his anti-Catholic theory, and to maintain that the former could remain intact, and even after the latter had received its definite consecration by the destruction of all Christian education. But none of his opponents and few of his friends considered that he had succeeded, and the latter clearly pointed, as the former had foreseen would be the case, to the supremacy of State teaching and State education as the normal outcome of the new legislation.

This essay should naturally terminate with an attempt to forecast the ultimate issue of the religious crisis from which France is now suffering, but that would necessarily entail an examination of the whole problem of the relationship of Church and State, of which the question of the congregations and of education is but one of the aspects; and my readers, whose patience I have tried only too severely, will doubtless understand that I cannot, at this stage, begin the treatment of a new, so extensive a development of my subject. It will suffice if I state my conviction that the idea of the separation of Church and State—which is extolled by our adversaries as the necessary end of the struggle and as constituting a new governmental formula—is, in the present condition of our political institutions and of our religious habits, a dangerous chimera. Here again the lessons of history provide an ample proof. The outcome of the experiment which was made from 1795 to 1799, in the direction of such separation, under the influence of the same ideas and of the same violent passions, was a ferocious persecution of the Catholic clergy and religion? The result would be the same to-day. To the attempt originated by the Revolution an end was put by the signing of the Concordat, the determining cause of which was, in the mind of Bonaparte, the spontaneous revival of the Catholic faith after the bloody period of the Terror. If the situation has altered in our days, it has changed in the sense that the religious movement has, in spite of certain political phenomena, become more intense and more deliberate than it formerly was, no less in intellectual circles than among the people.

While the governing classes, victims of an incomprehensible blindness, strive to tear up the imperishable tree of Christianity, it is putting forth fresh roots, which are penetrating ever deeper and deeper into the souls of men. Banished from its place in the laws and institutions of our country and in the ranks of officialdom, the Church is daily winning an unexpected place in the life of the nation as the result of the very fact that it has been persecuted and of the natural needs of mankind. Now more than ever it appears in the light of a moral force, immense and indispensable, whose influence no prudent Government can possibly misapprehend. An attempt may be made to combat it, but to ignore it is impossible; sooner or later they will have to come to terms with it. Whatever the extent, the duration, and the effects of the present crisis may be, that must be the inevitable conclusion, for that alone can guarantee that measure of religious liberty which is compatible with the conditions of the age in which we live.

High above the disputes, the passions and the excesses of all political parties, one fact dominates the history of these last years; though obscured by the thick cloud in which religious discord has involved us, it has yet been clear to all who can penetrate into the heart of the nation. I mean the existence of an immense, a universal aspiration toward reconciliation and appeasement; of an imperious desire, which must triumph in the end, to see the hearts

FATHER JETTE, ALASKAN MISSIONARY

Talks to a Free Press Reporter About His Original Indian Prayer Book and the Ten's Custom.

About to leave St. Boniface College after ten months' residence there as Mathematical Professor, is a missionary from the far north, Rev. Father Jette, S.J., whose field of labor in the Upper Yukon, on the Alaskan side of the boundary, is the farthest north mission of the Roman Catholic Church on this continent. To a representative of the Free Press, who called upon him, Father Jette very kindly told a great deal about the Indians of Northern Alaska, their peculiar customs and difficult language, and about the work being done among them. While here he is guiding through the press the first complete translation into the language of the Indians of his wide parish of the prayer book, catechism and hymns. Translations have already been made into a dialect somewhat akin to this one by Archbishop MacDonald, of the Church of England. The excellence of these books encouraged Father Jette in attempting translations into the more difficult language of his Indians. The completed work, in many a realm of beautiful penmanship, has been for some time in the Free Press job department, whence it will issue in a few days in book form. The only printing previously done in this dialect was done on a small hand press away up on the Upper Yukon, with the assistance of Indian boys.

The first job in Father Jette's translation was the making of an alphabet. This is phonetic, each symbol representing one sound only. Most of the letters of the English alphabet are retained, though with a use somewhat different from the English. The French "e" (with acute accent) and "u" are employed. There being no "r" sound in the spoken language and the letter "r" consequently out of work, it has been given new employment, and stands for the "ch" sound, as in German or Scotch. Finally the "w" or Polish "i" sound, a common one in the language, is represented by an ordinary "i" with a cross stroke.

This language Father Jette calls the Ten's, this being the word for "man," and the nearest approach the Indians have to a tribe name. The early explorer, Alexander MacKenzie, found near the mouth of the river, bearing his name, a similar word in use, which he wrote "tinnit." The Oblate Fathers in still another district write it "Dene." The language is unusually difficult, and not until he had been three years among the people could Father Jette speak it with fluency. "After one or even two years," he said, "I could say only a few of the things I wished to say, and the Indians could speak among themselves without my understanding them. Now, however, I can say all I wish, and I can also understand everything they say."

HOW HE LEARNED THE LANGUAGE.

He had only a very little instruction from an English-speaking man, and had practically to learn the whole language from the Indians themselves. His way of doing this was very ingenious. "I had with me," he explained, "the back numbers of a good many magazines. These I would give to the men to look at. I listened to the remarks they made to one another about the pictures. I wrote these down as well as I could. Then I rehearsed these sentences to an intelligent Indian boy, who, being blind, and a paralytic, was given a home at the mission. He spoke only his own language, but still managed to help me by making corrections, giving synonyms, and patiently explaining by signs and in simpler words. In this way I gathered a vocabulary. Then in my third year I was ill, and so was able to give time to the verb, and master it. Then my work was done."

There is a distinctly humorous aspect to this method of acquiring language as Father Jette illustrated by a story about Father Barnum, of St. Michael's—a nephew, by the way, of the great showman—and his Eskimo equivalent of "paddle," the Eskimo equivalent of:

First person I paddle.
Second person you paddle.
Third person he paddles.
Father Barnum selected an intelligent looking native, and taking up a paddle, went through all the motions of using it. Then he said to his chosen teacher: "Cha?" "What?" which is the one word ever on the tongue of the beginner. "Cha?" The Eskimo in good faith gave him a phrase corresponding to the latter paddle movements. It was good faith Father Barnum wrote it down, though he wondered why "you paddle" should be so long in Eskimo. He then gave his instructor the paddle, urged him by signs to go through the motion of paddling, and again asked "Cha?" "What?" Again the Eskimo in good faith gave it, and the priest wrote it down. This was the first person of his verb. There remained now only the third, "he paddles." The white man pointed to a native approaching in a canoe, paddling of course, and again asked "What?" The phrase the instructor in all good faith gave him for this was quite different from the other two, and very long to be simply the third person singular indicative of a commonly used verb. But this was no more queer than many other phrases of the language, thought the priest, and, well content, he began to practice his verb. And this, as he sometimes afterwards discovered, was the verb he practised.

"First person—I paddle well.
Second—You paddle very poorly.
Third—That man wants some tobacco."
As he began to acquire the language somewhat, Father Jette began in a small and imperfect way to translate into the prayer book and Psalms. With correction after correction, made in untiring patience, he perfected the work until an in-

telligent Indian said to him: "Now at least I can understand your prayers. Heretofore I have not understood them." The exquisite satisfaction such a statement would bring to the patient missionary must have been well high indeed. The translation thus made is the one now issuing in book form from the Free Press job department. It is by no means complete. Publishing books is an expensive undertaking. When additional funds are secured Father Jette intends having other books printed.

UPPER YUKON PARISH.

The Parish in which Father Jette is the only missionary lies along the Upper Yukon, within the boundaries of Alaska. There is in it territory enough for a very fair sized kingdom, the length being four hundred miles and the width two hundred. The mission headquarters are at Nulato, on the Yukon river, and of this place the missionary is postmaster. The neighboring missionaries are two, of the Church of England, one two hundred miles up the river from Nulato; the other two hundred miles down. Away out, even beyond this, well up within the Arctic circle, is a mission maintained by Moravians.

Over his immense parish Father Jette is travelling almost continuously, in summer by canoe, in winter by dog train. He visits each settlement at least once a year, but some of the nearer and more accessible can be given two or even three visits a year.

Such a visit extends over a week or some times two weeks according to circumstances. If the season is a busy one the visits are shorter. In the winter visits are often shortened by the difficulty of carrying food supplies to maintain seven ravenous Eskimos and the wise missionary is determined not to make himself burdensome to the people. When the dogs can be sent away while the missionary remains in a village, winter is the best time of all for this visiting.

Almost every day during the visit Mass is celebrated in the morning. Half the people attend one day while the other half look after the fish traps. Next day the fishers of the day before are at Mass while the other half take up the work. Three or four times during each day the missionary gathers old and young for instruction. The catechism and hymns of the church are taught. In the evening the people are all assembled in one of the larger lodges and taught. In some of the villages practically all the inhabitants come to this evening instruction, in others only a few.

On Saturday there is no teaching. This is the housecleaning day. Father Jette says he thinks there is not a house in the parish the door of which is not carefully scrubbed every Saturday. On Friday the people will say: "You will not teach to-morrow, Father, it is the washing day," and the father is very glad to let cleanliness instead of Godliness occupy the minds of the people for one day.

In this respect the Alaskan Indians are very different from the Eskimos, who are very dirty. They could scarcely be otherwise, living as they do underground. The Indians formerly lived after the same fashion but now have well built log houses. To enter an Eskimo dwelling, says Father Jette, you must first jump down into a tunnel about four feet deep, then crawl along on hands and knees for about twelve feet, when you come to the hanging skin called by courtesy a doorway. This you draw aside and enter—if no fire is burning. Before the fireplace being located exactly opposite the door, entrance or exit must be made across it; a rather troublesome proceeding when a good fire is burning.

BAPTIZED BY RUSSIANS.

The Indians throughout Alaska were baptized by the Russians when the country was under the paw of the Great Bear. Beyond formal baptism the Greek Church did nothing to Christianize the people. One idea, however, they seem to have impressed very deeply on their native mind, that they must not change their religion. So, many of the older people solemnly assert that they are of the Greek Church, though beyond the name they know nothing of it. These same old people are perfectly willing, anxious indeed, that their children should be of the Roman faith. They will say: "Yes, these children are of your faith; you must instruct them, as for us we are of the Russian church."

Father Jette has much that is intensely interesting to tell of the Indian and Eskimo customs. A few of the other Indians and many of the Eskimos, he says, yet cling to ligamy, however, the marriage of two wives, not polygamy. The most strict and exact set of conventions surrounds the family relations. In the house one wife sits to the left, the other to the right of her husband. The house is always built on the bank of the river, between river and forest, so that from their places of sitting the wives are known as the riverside wife and the woods side wife. Of the two, the riverside wife is the chief, though the children of the two wives seem to be on an equality in every way.

Among the Eskimos a very peculiar custom prevails. Each village has its Kasim or Kasiga, a sort of club house at which all the men of the village meet. It is a very large place, provided with bunk beds and all sorts of Eskimo luxuries. In the winter the men live in this club, the women remaining in the huts. Here the men work and amuse themselves generally, while the women at home prepare food and bring it to them three times a day. A stranger in the village is "put up" at this club in a Kasiga as a guest of the whole community.

INDIANS ARE NOT GREEDY.

Father Jette speaks in the highest terms of the hospitality of the Indians. "They have," he says, "no hesitation in accepting gifts from the whites and for these they do not return thanks profusely. So they are blamed for being greedy. As a matter of fact they give quite as freely as they receive. The principle upon which they act, is that if who plenty should as a matter of course give to those who have less, and who can say the principle is not a good one?"

In a great many cases in the north, where white men were in need, the Indians, though poor, cheerfully shared what they had with them.

"Once," said Father Jette, "when teaching in a village a long way

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from headquarters, my stock of tobacco became exhausted. I paddled down the river to where there was a trader I knew would accommodate me. When I returned to the village an old man said: "Ah, father, you do not trust us. You trust the white men only. Why did you not tell us you had no tobacco? We would have gladly shared what we have with you." "Thus," continued Father Jette, "I was reproved."

In one respect the natives of the far north are very different from their brethren of the plains. The Indian—as we have been accustomed to have him described to us, at any rate—had in him a good deal of the poetic temperament. The orations made as the pipe passed around were crammed with simile and metaphor. "The North Indians and metaphor," Father Jette says, "are most matter of fact. They not only do not themselves indulge in simile or metaphor; they cannot understand the use of this form of speech. So a missionary must get along in his teaching without the help of comparisons or illustrations."

He tells of a priest who when trying to give his people the idea of authority—an idea quite unfamiliar to them, since they have no chiefs in the ordinary sense of the term—spoke by way of illustration of the necessity of having a captain of a steamer, from whom the crew could receive orders. He had just begun to develop this illustration, when his people, turning to one another, said, "He is speaking of a steamer. A steamer must be coming. Let us go down to the river to see it," leaving the missionary alone.

So among the missionaries it has become almost proverbial that these people at any rate cannot be taught by parables. They have their folk lore, however, and Father Jette, understanding their language perfectly, eating and sleeping in their houses, and getting their confidence entirely, has learned a great deal of it. But he says, a great part of its charm is in the telling. Certainly a great charm is in Father Jette's own telling of some of these tales, but they probably could not be well rendered in cold print.

As soon as his book is finished, which will be in the course of a week or two, Father Jette intends to return to his parish—the farthest north of his church in North America.—Free Press, June 7.

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The Choice of Words

"What I admire about Henry is his choice of words," said Jack, looking up from his drawing.

"Why, Jack," said Ethel, with a toss of her head, "I heard him make a slip in grammar only yesterday."

Ethel was one of those who notice and comment upon defects, rather than merits. Jack's eyes twinkled.

"Henry may not be perfect in grammar—he hasn't had much chance of education—but his choice of words is a different matter. I've never heard Henry use a profane word, nor a malicious one, nor even an unkind one, when he can find a pleasant one instead. He has the treatment of good-humored phrases and cheerful proverbs and bracing sayings of olden times."

Isn't any such word as "fail" in his bright lexicon of youth, I tell you, or any such word as "sulk" or "fret" or "sneer" or "shirk" Henry keeps the pick of the vocabulary and nothing else. If everybody's English was good as his, conversation would be wonderfully improved, to say no more of conduct."

Jack's laughing comment had a deal of truth in it. There are words we can choose, and use, that will improve ourselves and all around us. The words "courage," "courtesy" and "cheerfulness" are good English for anybody. The single phrases, "I ought," "I can," are invaluable when used frequently. The word "self" needs to be dropped as completely as possible. If we try to drop, also, "I," "me" and "mine," we shall find out some things about the amount of egotism in our conversation that will do us good. Our well as its grammatical side; and, of the two, was not Jack right, and is not the moral side the one to admire?—Forward.

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