THE BULL AGAINST THE COMET. Father Walsh Explains and Explode

Editor Troy Press :- In the Mechanicville Mercury of Friday, August 25, I find the following title and portion of an editorial:—

"ANOTHER BULL AGAINST THE COMET."
"Lord! save us from the devil, the Turk and the Comet.' These words were added to the "Ave Maria" by Pope Calixtus III., in 1456, and were repeated daily during the appearance of a large comet which many at that time thought presaged the Day of Judgment. The comet placidly con-tinued its course in spite of these daily cursings, and has regularly appeared every seventy-five years since that date. History tells us that the Romish Church in those Dark Ages 'held unbounded sway over the lives and fortunes and consciences of men,' and that during the comet's stay untold millions were poured into the Papal treasury.

This extract, because mendacious and libellous, has given deep offence to a large part of that community. As I have been requested by its representative citizens to deny it and corroborate the denial in the columns of the Press, I avail myself of the privilege so often given me by you of defending the truth and spreading the light. I merely refer to the statement itself and ignore altogether the local causes which have inspired it. I do not even dare to impugn the sincerity of the editor of the Mercury. It is, I am glad to affirm, perhaps more a matter of comparative intermation than of studied religious bitterness. He pos sibly saw in the alleged event a splendid chance for alliteration or parallelism, and the question of the possible forgery of the incident never dawned on him. He undoubtedly has read the fact in some anti-Catholic publication and believed it. I know that of late in Boston and Chicago printing and publishing houses have been established for the purpose of editing and distributing the vilest forgeries against the Catholic Church and thus build up a business enterprise on that most profound, most ineradicable and most censurable of all human infimities-religious hate. What wonder if the detestable publications do their envenomed work with special individuals whose lack of correct information or prejudicial prepossessions make them easy victims! In such instances the blame lies more with the lies and forgeries than with their possibly honest propagators and believers.

1. Calixtus III., elected Pope in 1455, was one of the most energetic, intrepid, learned and zealous of the successors of St. Peter. His reign continued only three years, for he was seventy seven at the time of his consecration, and his gigantic labors helped the years in wearing him out. The industry of his short pontificate is evidenced by the thirty-eight large tomes in the Vatican Library contain ing his letters, decrees and the facts of his reign. It was the age when the crusading spirit having become ex hausted, the Turks began the invasion of Europe with a new aggressiveness Civilization was threatened. Christianity was menaced if the Koran secured a lodgment in Europe. Th islands of the Ægean sea became an easy prey to the warlike Moslems Then Constantinope, the key to Europe was captured and the victorious Ma homet began his march to Vienna Hungary was invaded and Belgrade at junction of the Danube and the Save besieged. The Pope recognized the awful crisis threatening Europe He prayed and supplicated the Chris tian princes to unite and repeal a com mon foe. Alfonso of Naples was too engrossed with his feasts to comply Charles VII. of France was too busy watching England. Frederick III. of Germany was too peace-loving to war even against the enemy nigh knock ing at his door. Genoa was eagerly de fending herself against Naples. Ven ice was conniving with the Sultan for commercial reasons, and love for the 'cursed flower," as Dante called the Florentine golden florin, made traitor of proud Florence in this supreme hour

The Pope stood alone in the face of the impending dangers, but he was a Borgia, whose Spanish courage neve quailed before a foe.

His fiery enthusiasm possessed him The crusade he would preach against the Turks fell coldly on craven cars. "Only cowards," he would say, "fear danger; the palm of glory grows no where save on the battlefield." Princes had failed him. He would appeal to the people. Their tithes he begged to equip a fleet to destroy the Turkish otilla marauding in the Eastern and Northern Mediterranean. He gave the The silverware of his table was melted into money. One day, gilt salt-cellars and other valuable articles were placed on his table. Calixtus ex · Away, away with these claimed: things! Take them for the Turks! Earthen ware will do for me!" In one of his letters he expresses a pre ference for a linen mitre, for the sake of sacrificing all for the defence of the

In the midst of these preparations an earthquake destroyed lives and houses in Naples and a comet appeared, A. D. 1456, described by the old chronicle Platina as "crinito et rubeo"-hairy and red, when the astronomers or astrologers declared to be a horrible portent of threatening disaster. As I have in my possession a rare copy of this same Platina, written only a few years after this occurrence, I refer to him for further information regarding this same comet. He says that Calix-tus, after the startling prediction of the astronomers, ordered prayers to avert the anger of God and turn it on

the Turks. He had the bells rung at mid day to remind the faithful of their duty to pray, and to these prayers does Platina ascribe the subsequent and phenomenal victory at Belgrade.

Raynaldus, a contemporaneous chronicler, says that even before the comet appeared Calixtus had ordered the church bells rung between noon and Vespers as for the Angelus, three "Our Fathers" and " Marys" recited, to which Indulgences were attached, for victory over the Mo-hammedans. When the comet appeared these prayers were merely con-tinued. The important point con firmed here is that the prayers were not initiated by the comet. they were, the Mercury will recall the comet scare of one year ago and cheerfully condone a form of superstitio which even all our boasted modern culture has failed to completely eradicate

In this recital, largely complied from Platina, Raynaldus and Pastor's volumes, stored with the knowledge of the hidden archives of the Vatican, only recently revealed, I fail to find the slightest confirmation of the false statements of the Mercury. Pastor alludes to the story of Calixtus, ordering the church bells rung against the comet and excommunicating it as a fable not worthy of refutation.

The fictitious ejaculation with which

the Mercury begins its amusing series of historical blunders never had any existence in fact. The words were never added to the Ave Maria. We even have serious doubts as to whether the editor of the Mercury knows the meaning of the Ave Maria. If he did, he should know this is the most popu lar prayer in the Church to day, and we who know it and recite it know further that we never repeat his words, nor were they ever repeated. Then tory? tells his something. What history? True or false? Who wrote this history? History tells him that the Romish Church held unbounded sway over the lives and fortunes and consciences of men in that day! been less murgers and rapine and wars. Please recall the deaf ear, and in som instances the contemptuous silence, in answer to the commands and petitions of Calixtus to combine and organize armies against the invading Turks as a fair exponent of the influence of the Holy See over the "fortunes and consciences" of men.
Charles VII. of Farnce would not

allow tithes to be collected nor German recruits for this new crusade to pass through his country, although frequently warned by the Pontiff.

The untold millions are the fiction of the Mercury. We have seen how Calixtus collected his moneys to fit out a fleet to save Europe. It was chiefly by the sacrifice of his own personal property and the Papal treasures gathered by his predecessor, Nicholas

And yet how did the story of Calix tus and this Bull against the come originate? We trace it to the French scientist, Dominique François Arago, born in 1786, died in Paris, 1853. This was the same Arago with whom grate to the United States for the study of science after the defeat of Waterloo, if the English had not interfered with the narrower limits of St. Helena. can only account for the perversity of Arago by that inexplicable hostility scientists generally conceive against Christianity and the Divine personality of French liberal or freethinker and scientist combined, such as Arago, assumed the proportions of a ferocious and unprincipled hate in its warfare against the Church.

tween Science and Religion" gives us an exhibition of the venom without the learning of his great French associate

That under the auspices of two such names the counterfeit should appear in the columns of the misnamed Mercury is no marvel; nor is it a whit less true that the vile thing is a lie, a forgery and a slander. - The Rev. John Walsh. in Troy, N. Y , Press.

Four men who were prominent in the Baltimore Congress were sadly missed in the Columbian Congress. They were Daniel Dougherty, John Boyle O'Reilly, Francis Kernan and John Gilmary Shea. Death had claimed them, but their names and works will ever remain as proud factors in the deliberations that reflected so much credit upon the Catholie laity of the country.-Catholic

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SCANDAL.

There is no more solemn-we well say awful-declaration of Our Lord than when He said: "Woe, unto the world because of scandals, for it must needs be that scandals nevertheless, woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh." The fact that our Lord said that it was necessary that scandals should come is no excuso for our giving scandal. On the con trary, we are solemnly warned that the just judgments of heaven may be expected to fall upon us if we give scandal. Again He says: "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea. This shows the estimation in which the subject of scandal was held by our

And how did the Apostle look upon the matter? Saint Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, speaking of the danger of giving scandal by eating meat which had been offered to idols says: "Take heed lest perhaps this your liberty become a stumbling block to the weak . . . and through thy knowledge shall the weak brothe perish for whom Christ hath died. Now when you sin thus against the brethren and wound their weak con science you sin against Christ. nimself this noble Apostle declares Wherefore if meat scandalize my brother I will never eat flesh lest should seandalize my brother." is the heroic charity which it would b well for us all to try to imitate.

Again the same Apostle in his Epistle to the Romans, says: Let us not therefore judge one another any nore, but judge this, rather, that you put not a stumbling block or a scanda in your brother's way." "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Chris died. Let not then your good be spoken of." "Therefore let us follow after the things that are of peace and keep the things that are of edification "It is good one towards another." not to eat meat, and not to drink wine or anything whereby thy brother is offended or scandalized, or made weak." Then follows a very solemn injunction to which we all do well to take earnest heed. "Hast thou faith. Have it to thyself before God. Blessed is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth." That is, if you have faith be true, be consisten and sincere before God. Mere pro festion is of no account. Blessed will you be if you do not condemn yourself by acting contrary to your professed principles. By all means be consistent and live up to your profession an your principles, for it is a fearful thing to give scandal to your brethren, to weak consciences, or to the world a large.

Can there possibly be a sadder reflect tion, or one more fraught with self-re proach and even with remorse when brought oefore the judgment seat o God, or, for that matter, before the judgment of our own consciences in the light of divine truth, than that by our deliberate or even thoughtless conduct, we may have been the cause-even the unwitting cause-of damage to the spiritual interests, perhaps the loss, of th soul of another? We remember to have heard the story-we believe was a true one-of a young man who was wavering in doubt about becoming a Christian, though often solicited by a Christian friend of his. Finally the young man, knowing that his friend would probably be placed in circum stances where his faith and constancy would be severely tried, said to him faith and become a Christian. If not I shall have very good evidence that Christianity is something to be professed but not practiced-in fact that it is all a sham." Fortunately his friend was true to his convictions and the young man was converted. But what if he had failed? Of course, it is easy to say that the young man was unrea-sonable in hanging his faith upon such slender thread. But that would no excuse the failure of his friend. The silent influence of example is proverb ial. Striking instances of it are con stantly occuring in the experience of almost every one. This is particularly the case with us Catholics.

We are surrounded by Protestants who are more or less ignorant of the Catholic religion. They are all curi-ous to learn about it. Some, under the influence of favorable circumstances, have lost their prejudices in a neasure, and are in a receptive state of mind, but they are not enough interested to go to work seriously to ex amine the subject. They are influenced by external circumstances, especially by the character and con duct of some Catholics with whom they are acquainted. It has often been remarked-and we believe the remark is perfectly true-that if all Catholics were good, consistent Christians, and lived up to the requirements of their religion the world would be converted in a comparatively short time. What a terrible thought that the conversion of th world should be retarded and souls lost through the inconsistencies of professed Catholics!

In this connection it seems to us that nothing is more deplorable, nothing more un-Catholic and scandalous, than the manifestation of party Spirit especially, among some of our Catholic A sincere love of the truth is thoroughly inconsistent with all mere personal considerations in advocating and defending it. Mere worldly am-

ent rather than for the triumph of truth, and efforts to widen rather that heal the breaches of controversy-all this is totally and entirely foreign to the true Christian and Catholic spirit, the true Christian and Catholic spirit, of the confessional. He refused on and scandals resulting from it will reveal their sad and desolating effects given him in his professional capacity, only in eternity at the judgment seat of God when all hearts shall be revealed and we shall be called upon to render an account of our stewardship. "See how these Christians love one

another," was the powerful attraction which multiplied converts in the early Church. Would to God the experience could be repeated in our day! It is believed by many that the conversion of our country has been put back many years-who can tell how many -by the unfortunate developments of the past year. Oh, brethren, for God's sake, for our own soul's sake, for the sake of dear, Holy Church which we love, and the salvation of souls for which we labor, let us "lay aside all malice and all guile, and dissimula-tions and envies and all detractions and as new-born babes desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby we may grow unto salvation if so be we have tasted that the Lord is Why should we be enmity with one another? Are we not all brethren? Are we not all laboring for the same glorious end? Are we not all agreed in essential principles? Why should we quarrel bout technicalities or matters of discipline which should be left to the ordinary of each diocese? Let us give up personal pique and sharp shooting, and severe criticism and let us try to ee eye to eye and settle down to calm, dignified, brotherly advocacy of the great truths for the defence of which we are set as watchmen on the walls of

THAT ENGLISH DECISION.

he Seal of the Confessional will Remain Intact Despite it-Views of two

The decision of Chief Justice Sir Frederick Jeune, of London Court of Probate and Divorce, that a clergy man can be compelled to reveal on the witness stand confessions made to him in confidence by his parishioners continues to attract attention in clerical and legal circles.

Bishop Keane, of the Catholic University, said:
"I have read the announcement of

Justice Jeune's decision, and, if it has been correctly reported, it is certainly contrary not only to common usage but to all similar decisions of which have ever heard in courts of law With the growth of civilization there have grown up certain customs which have by common consent been con-sidered sacred. The custom in question is one of these. Civilization has declared that the confidences of the confessional are sacred, and when a cour of law lifts its hand and says this shall not be so, it says that the civilization of the age cannot make any regula tion which the law is bound to respect Civilization and the law ought to go hand in hand, but they have not de so in this case, and I should say that the decision of Justice Jeune, if we have it reported correctly, certainly cannot stand

THE QUESTION RAISED HERE. "I know that this question has been raised in the United States once to my certain knowledge, and I think twice—both times in the State of New York The matter was carried to the Supreme Court of the State, where the decision was that a priest could not be com the other prominent name identi-fied with this forgery of Arago is our own Draper, who in his "Conflict Be-tween Science and Religion" gives us pelled to divulge the secrets confided confessional. If this had not been so, there must have ceased to be any such thing as a sacred confidence was abnormally acute. If persons ized society. decision so directly contrary to all precedent and to common sense cannot

The Rev. J. Havens Richards, Pres ident of Georgetown University, when asked concerning the decision, 'I have seen the account of the matter published in the papers, but know nothing further about it. It is the first time to my knowledge that the question of confidential testimony has ever been raised in the case of a Protestant minister, although it has bee several times decided in this country that a priest was exempt from the necessity of testifying concerning confidences gained through the confessional. I remember one such case in Pennsylvania, another in Virginia and another in New York. In each of these the priest was imprisoned for a short time, but the decision of the lower Court was reversed by the Supreme Court of the State.

In the present case, the only thing that surprises me is the statement by the papers that the minister yielded to coercion and furnished the information sought of him. This leads me to think that the story may be incorrect. So far as I am aware, it has always been the custom for the Courts to respect the confidences reposed in professiona men in their professional capacity. This is necessary for the well-being of society itself, and it seems to me that any professional man, be he a minister or not would suffer any penalty rather than violate a confidence so placed.

WOULD GO TO PRISON. "What would be the result if the Jeune decision should be taken as a precedent and an attempt made to

compel priests to testify? The priests would go to prison. No penalty, however severe, would induce a priest to violate the confidence thus reposed in him. I recall one case where the stand taken was even bition, pride of opinion, personal pique and personal vanity of special gifts, broader than this. It was during the strife for the vanquishing of an oppon- Irish land troublesand a priest—Father

Kelher, I think, was the name-was called to testify concerning some in-formation that had been confided to him, though not through the medium as he had been made a confidant only because of his position. The opposing counsel admitted this, and the fight in the case was made on this ground. The Court held, and justly, as everyone knew, that the information was not given to Father Kelher in a professional capacity, and he went sentence and was given an ovation on

"No, I do not think that there is any significance in the decision of the Probate Court at all. The same thing has happened before in the lower Courts. I speak with certainty only in the case of priests, and the decision of the lower Court has always been reversed by the Court above.

ANOTHER PHASE.
Henry R. Sargent, O. H. C., writes to the Baltimore Sun from Holy Cross House, Westminster, Md., concerning a cablegrain from London, as follows:

"In your issue of August 2, there appeared a statement in which a priest of the Church of England was reported to have divulged in an open court of justice what had been said to him in the privacy of confession. The reference to the "High Church branch of the Protestant Episcopal denomination and the contrast volunteered between the clergy of the English and Roman Churches in regard to the observance of the seal naturally suggested an in quiry into the accuracy of the report May I ask you to make public the fol lowing extract from a letter written by a gentleman in England entirely com petent to speak in the case:
"'The information contained in

the paragraph you send is so mislead ing as to make it entirely false To begin with, there was no mentio of confession in the case before the Court ; the clergyman simply declined to say anything in the witness-box which was told him confidentially in the course of his ministerial office Sir Francis Jeune (the presiding Judge) then observed that of course he could not listen to any such plea, but as the evidence was not material to the case, he should say nothing further, and the matter dropped. There was no judicial ruling on the point, and, of course, had there been the clergyman would no doubt, have stood firm in the matter.' I send you also a copy of the English Church Times, in which the legal aspect of the case was dealt with. It seems proper to make the request that the same prominence should be given to this correction as was given to the former ommunication.

HEARING OF THE DYING.

Very Acute and Bed-side Whis

It has been asserted by the bes nedical authority that persons at the point of death are much more conscious of what goes on about them than is generally supposed. An incident that tends to substantiate the assertion is related of Michael Brannagan, of Steubenville, Ohio. Mr. Brannagan was for seven months in a cataleptic state, and lay to all appearance dead, the only sign of life being the continuance of respiration and circulation He was afterward cured, and it was then that he described to his astonished nurses all that had been said and done by the doctors and attendants during his illness.

He declares that, though most of his who are called upon to attend death-It is my opinion that a beds would only remember these facts, they might spare their loved ones much needless suffering A prayer or short invocation breathed over the departing spirit would certainly prove far more cheering and profitable than those inconsiderate whispers which are so heedlessly uttered and which banish that recollection and repose of soul se necessary in the supreme moment of life. - Ave Maria

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