

that the evidence of religion could be weakened or the authority of Councils sapped by a knowledge of the facts with which I have been dealing, or of others which are not less grievous or less certain because they remain untold." It was not to be supposed that this language would give satisfaction to the dominant party in the Church of Rome, which had already been much tried by Lord Acton's energy behind the scenes during the Vatican Council. An apology which was more injurious than the attack added fuel to the flames. "If I am excommunicated," he wrote to Mr. Gladstone from Aldenham on the 19th of December 1874, "I should rather say when I am." Yet he was not. He satisfied his bishop, Browne of Shrewsbury, that he was dogmatically sound, and that it would have been inconsistent with his argument to attack the Vatican decrees. He had indeed accepted them as the foundation of his case. What he wanted to show was that neither the Jesuits nor the Inquisition, neither false doctrines nor bad Popes, had made Catholics indifferent to the moral law. Manning, now a Cardinal, was not so easily contented as Bishop Browne, or as Bishop Clifford, who also absolved Lord Acton. His haughty and commanding temper had been stimulated by promotion, and by the favour of the Pope. It was one of his most cherished aims to humble the pride of the old Catholic families, and make them feel the discipline of the Church. He wrote three letters to Lord Acton, and received, it need scarcely be said, the most courteous replies, which left him as wise as he was before. But he went no further, and the correspondence was never published. Manning was not without prudence, and he shrank from proceeding to extremities with a man whose intellect was as keen as his, and whose knowledge was vastly superior. It would not have cost Lord Acton much research to produce a summary account of the Inquisition, or a biographical sketch of selected Popes, which would have done more to prove the soundness of his position than to edify the Christian world. The new Cardinal, if he had indulged in an historical controversy