

THE CONDITION OF FRANCE.

What the Clergy Have to Contend Against

By a FRENCH PRIEST.

It would be difficult to enumerate all the laws and vexatious decrees secretly concocted and devised in the Masonic Lodges, and carried through Parliament by a majority of sworn enemies of the Church. Yes, the liberties of the Catholic Church have been set at naught in a thousand different ways by the sectarian and tyrannical rulers of France. Laws have been forged for the annoyance of the priests and people to such a degree that outside of France no conception is possible of the hostility under which French Catholics are now groaning. The powers that be have left no means untried to enforce the "new dispensation;" the religious Orders have been expelled, their churches closed, their pupils scattered, the schools have been "laid out"—that is, the teaching Orders, for the parochial school children, have been replaced by "certificated" lay teachers; every emblem of religion is banished from the schools, the very name of God erased from the school books. The tolerated Orders are being mulcted in a most scandalous way, by enormous fiscal impositions levied from each member of the Order at the death of their brethren. The hospitals and other asylums are also laid out—that is, the Sisters of Charity and other devoted, self-sacrificing religious are replaced by "certificated lay nurses," squanderers of the public funds, let what may happen the sick, the poor, and the dying. Everything must be, according to law, "laïque, obligatoire, et gratuit"—i. e., godless with a vengeance, compulsory despite "liberty," and gratuitous whilst the Budget for education is increased by millions and is constantly advancing, whilst the number of pupils is decreasing in the Government schools, and Catholics are compelled to endow their own free schools if they want religion taught to their children.

But of all the sectarian trickeries by which the rulers or persecutors of France have duped the country none has been devised with more diabolical skill than the military laws with reference to the clergy. As you know, a law exists which obliges every French man to be a soldier. This law makes no exceptions; consequently, aspirants to the priesthood, postulants to religious Orders, because all are equal before the law, must, at the age of twenty-one, be soldiers for one year, and afterwards during three years, twice a year must spend twenty-eight days in a regiment for drill and manoeuvres. The law is rigid; on the day appointed the young Levite must cast off his soutane, don the military uniform, and with his breviary under his arm, join his regiment.

This general exodus from the seminary, at the autumn season, has been the occasion for Catholic France to introduce into the sacred liturgy of the country a new religious ceremony in which all conscripts join. So far, the Catholics have to thank the Freemasons for this new "departure." The departure of the young conscripts for the army is thus marked all over France by a glorious manifestation. The ceremony takes place in the church, and bears the impress of the superhuman character of self-sacrifice. Parents and friends, indeed the faithful in general, nay, a whole nation assembled in the churches, publicly praying together, bearing witness to the fact that he who answers the call of duty obeys the law of God. The smallest villages as well as the largest cities, all present the same spectacle of a heroic sacrifice. The Bishops in person show their paternal solicitude, and all over the country thousands of voices in unanimous concert proclaim the greatness of the people's resignation and the magnitude of the sacrifice de-

manded. Thus religion, officially silenced by infidel and illegal enactments, resumes its position and character in the social practices and customs of a Catholic people—a result precisely the reverse of what the framers of the iniquitous law had in view when they passed the decree.

—But scenes of a still more instructive and soul-stirring character are exhibited on the occasion of the conscripts' farewell meetings in the churches. Amongst them we see the young ecclesiastics, who, as loyal subjects, humbly submit to the rigour of the law, iniquitous though it be, for aspirants to the church at all times and everywhere enjoyed an ecclesiastical immunity from civil service. These muster at the foot of the altar in presence of their Bishop and Professors. Twenty, thirty, forty of them, from the diocese to which they belong, are there wearing the livery of true soldiers of Christ—the black cassock to indicate that they are already dead to this world, and the white cotta, the symbol of a life of innocence and sanctity in preparation for their Levitical duties in God's Holy Church. To-day they form the phalanx of that army in battle array terrible to the devil and the unbeliever alike; tomorrow to don the soldier's uniform. Oh! could you but listen to the eloquent farewell address of the Bishops to their "must-be-soldier" sons! Called by God to serve their country, as churchmen, in defence of the souls of their fellowmen, they are constrained to submit to a shameful legislation which imposes on them an additional sacrifice.

The priests, the Bishops, presiding over these farewell ceremonies, whilst loudly protesting against the cowardly violation of their right, as they did whilst the decree was being debated in Parliament, and giving expression to the grief which an impious and scandalous injustice causes them to feel, address the poor children of the Sanctuary with words of patience, resignation, perseverance and confidence in God. Then Mass is said, at the close of which they renew their sacred promises and engagements to God and to their Bishop, who embraces them as they come up, one by one, for his farewell blessing. This ceremony adds to the manifestation an indescribable character, and tears flow freely from the eyes of all bystanders, strangers and friends alike, whilst the parting "conscripts" show by their imperturbable serenity and cheerfulness, as though they passed from one college duty to another, that they mean to start on an expedition wherein victory shall be theirs.

The barracks being their novitiate, they must sacrifice the spiritual and educational training of the Seminary with the duties sacred to their holy calling, and practice under terrible difficulties the virtues which later on they shall have to teach with the authority of the priesthood.

The writer of these lines has just received a letter from one of his relatives, a Seminarist of the College of Lyons, who is now a soldier at Belley. What he says is well calculated to excite the deepest pity for this class of young soldiers, and to induce the faithful to pray fervently for the preservation of the Faith in France by the preservation of a fervent priesthood, more needed now than ever before. The "Abbe" writes as one from another world:

"I am where I never dreamed I should ever be! I had to give up the noble habit of the Sanctuary, which it had been my delight to wear for over two years, and don the uniform of a French infantry soldier! Oh, how cleverly the devil combined his plan by means of his agents, the Freemasons! When still at the college I could not quite realize the magnitude of the dangers to which we Seminarists are exposed at the Barracks. How

can I describe the life which I am forced to lead here, and picture to you the company that surrounds me! I find no words in the French language to express the feelings of my honest soul. I shall not attempt to give you even the faintest idea of what I hear and see and feel and suffer—impossible to touch on the subject. Suffice it to say that the Barracks are the greatest schools of beastliness (*abrutissement*) and of immorality. One must, indeed, see, to know, what is meant by "abrutissement," and to what excess and shameless licentiousness a man goes when he becomes a *beast*. The language which I hear is limited to the coarsest expressions, the most monstrous obscenities and most revolting blasphemies! Every word is a sin, every gesture a crime, every laugh expressive of some diabolical idea. Oh, how well the Freemasons, in their Atheistic schools, have trained the boys who are to-day the soldiers of France! The wildest animals for the wildest prey! But for the thought that I am on duty and must make the sacrifices I should have long since deserted and gone over to Ireland. The life I am forced to lead is simply inconceivable; I suffer indescribable moral pains; and what is worse, so far no regard is shown for me, who am known to be a clerical, a Seminarist, the red rag, it would seem, before the bull! A thousand times rather to be on the banks of the Uhanghi, in the Dark Continent, with your missionaries, than in this hell! I remember my Seminary, my chapel, my school-room, my directors; I think of the charms, the calm, the peacefulness of my companions at the Seminary. I think of you, of all I know, and the contrast of what is with that which was, but adds to my agony! Oh, more than ever pity me and pray for me, that I may come out of the Babylonian furnace without injury and sing my *Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino!*"

Were it not for the mercy of God, incalculable would be the effects on a Catholic nation, needing an active staff of forty thousand priests, the consequences of such a state of things as that now described—the barracks would be the insatiable whirlpools where our ecclesiastical vocations would be shipwrecked, the mouths of hell which would swallow all that is holy for ever. God, who protected Daniel in the midst of the lions, even to-day, however, foils the designs of the wicked and He brings in the person of the priest-soldiers a powerful disinfectant into the vitiated military quarters, whose inmates are the more worthy of God's compassion as their despotic rulers, despite of every protestation, had suppressed the spiritual help and action of the army chaplains. And oh! how the Almighty has already confounded the pride of His enemies. These had closed the barracks to the Army chaplains; but, unconsciously, they framed, on the other hand, a decree by which the Seminarists, a whole army of chaplains in themselves, are to be quartered permanently with the soldiers. Does this not show the hour of God's mercy on the unjustly oppressed people, who sacrifice their heart's blood for the salvation of their country? Thus the persecutors have reopened the doors of the barracks to Christian traditions, and brought the priest into contact with the soldier and the Catholic priesthood into contact with the people; thus God, in His mercy, turns evil to good account. Already the people commence to see that the odious military law aimed at the clergy is supremely absurd.—*Irish Catholic and Nation.*

If the Baby is Cutting Teeth

Be sure and use that old, well-tried remedy, Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for children teething. It soothes the child, softens the gums, allays all pain, cures wind colic and is the best remedy for diarrhoea. Twenty-five cents a bottle. It is the best of all.

Leaflets from Lorette.

Among the good things that Christmas brought to our sanctum was this excellent publication of the pupils of Lorette Abbey. Opinions may differ as to what the standard and character of a school journal should be. As a stimulus to ardent study, an aid to thorough scholarship, and an evidence of correct literary taste and culture, we consider the Leaflets a very good model indeed. It is interesting, bright and sparkling from beginning to end. And it is suggestive, solid and instructive, without showing extensive, varied and thoughtful reading on the part of the pupils, and judicious, thorough training on the part of the teachers. And, what seems to us most commendable, it is evidently the honest work of the pupils themselves, with very little, if any, outside aid.

Each contributor has something good and all are well worth reading, from the pretty opening poem to the capital musical catechism and the graceful obituary tribute to the memory of Miss Chopitea. Milton says Eve was "the fairest of his daughters," and Miss O'Leary might therefore justify her telling us that the "Father of his country" was "his country's best beloved son." But we beg to assure Miss Robinson that Mrs. O'Flaherty never said "aslapp" for asleep. Dialect is not the strong point of writers or teachers at the Abbey this year.

In general, however, the contributors of last year show marked improvement in purity of diction and perfection of style, and the new recruits give hopeful promise of successful work. This Christmas number is on the whole a credit to the gifted pupils of Lorette Abbey, and will be a Christmas joy to their teachers and friends. We wish the Leaflets many Happy New Years.

Knights of St. John.

St. Mary's Commandery 216 R. C. U. Knights of St. John held their regular meeting on Sunday Dec. 9th inst. The president was greeted with a large attendance of St. Mary's Knights, and also a good representation from other city commanderies amongst them being Sr. Kts. W. H. Cahill, Haffy, Kew, Murphy of St. Paul's Commandery, Sr. Kts. Callaghan and Kels of Leo, No. 2, all of whom delivered stirring and instructive addresses pertaining to the welfare of the union in general.

St. Mary's Commandery No. 216, R.C.U. Knights of St. John, held their regular meeting on Sunday afternoon, Dec. 23rd, and elected the following officers for 1895:

President, Joseph McEvoy, acclamation; 1st Vice-President, J. E. Whelan; 2nd Vice-President, Ed. Davine; Rec. Secretary, John P. McCarthy; Financial Secretary, Ed. Peterson; Treasurer, Chas. Bird, acclamation; Director of ceremonies, P. C. Rosalter; Sergeant-at-Arms, John Whelan; Trustees, I. Furlong, J. J. Doye, Michael Clanoy, Chas. O'Brien, T. A. McIntyre.

The installation will take place on Sunday, January 6th, 1895, at their new hall, corner Queen and Cameron streets at 2 P.M., after which an open meeting will be held, commencing at 3.30 p.m. where all members of other city Commanderies and their friends will be welcomed to hear Sir Knight W. H. Cahill deliver his able lecture on the "Knights of St. John."

The following was unanimously adopted by St. Mary's Commandery, 216 Knights of St. John.

Whereas the allwise Providence has called to his eternal reward the beloved Father of our esteemed Brother Sir Knight Clanoy.

Be it resolved that we the members of St. Mary's Commandery, No. 216 R. C. U. Knights of St. John unite in expressing our sincere sympathy for the sad loss that Sir Knight Clanoy has sustained by the death of his beloved Father, and we pray that divine Providence through the intercession of his Holy mother may give him strength to bear his sad loss with Christian resignation.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be spread in the minutes of this meeting and forwarded to the CATHOLIC REGISTER and official messenger for publication.

CHAS. O'BRIEN, Secretary.

So thorough is the excellence of Ayer's Hair Vigor that it can be used with benefit by any person, no matter what may be the condition of the hair, and in every case it occasions satisfaction and pleasure, in addition to the benefit which invariably comes from its use.